CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

MARCH 1984 75p.
No. 2

THE MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW



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Written by Graham Stafford.

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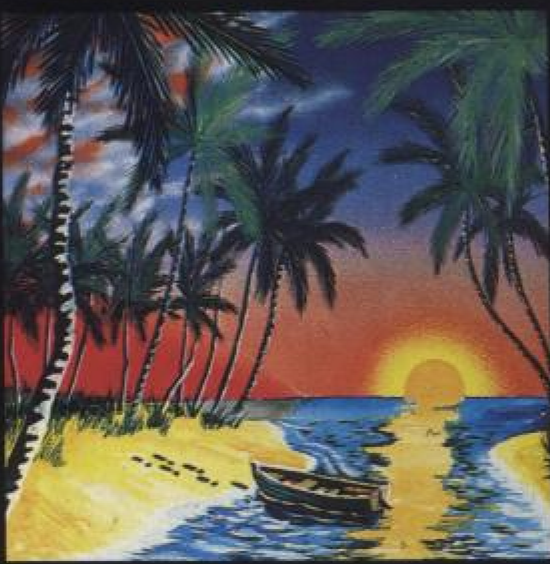
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CRASH
MICRO GAMES ACTION

ISSUE No. 2 MARCH 1984

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Issue 3 (April) will be on sale from Friday 16th. March.

CRASH READERS TALK TO SINCLAIR
RUN IT AGAIN takes command of missile command.
CRASH Readers Questionaire — your chance to tell us how to do it!
Plus the news roundup, reviews, articles and guide.



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If you would like to contribute to CRASH please send articles or ideas for projects to the above address. Articles should be typed. We cannot undertake to return them unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

Cover illustration: Oliver Frey

NEW GAME OF THE MONTH

So many good games seemed to qualify this month, to avoid open warfare in the office we decided to award the five contenders equal status...



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BACK AGAIN

First of all may I take this opportunity to thank everyone of you who has written to **CRASH** to say how much you liked the launch issue of the magazine. A magazine like **CRASH** relies so heavily on the goodwill of its readers and the support of the software houses. I can already see that we are going to get a lot of feedback from you, and you can be sure that we shall do our level best to incorporate any ideas you may have. But I should also like to thank the software houses who have been so generous with their compliments.

A magazine is a living entity — a kind of three-way partnership between publisher, reader and advertiser. After all, the advertiser is the one who produces the games that you want to buy. What the magazine has to do is act as a forum for information — and that's what we intend to be. That is a major reason for the **CRASH HOTLINE** (which is obviously proving very popular too)! It offers the reader an opportunity to tell us (and in turn the software houses) what you enjoy. There may be some teething troubles with the **HOTLINE** because it has exceeded our expectations, so you may find it constantly engaged! We apologise for any inconvenience, and suggest you use the write-in coupon if you have problems. We are doing our best to make further arrangements to expand the phone system to cope. But keep it up!

Along the same lines of sussing out what you like, we are planning a **CRASH QUESTIONAIRE** for issue three. The more people who fill this in, the better and more accurate the results will be. It will help us in presenting information in a way you prefer, and we hope it will be of benefit to the software producers too. So look out for that next month.

THE TERMINAL MAN

I'd like to thank readers for all the nice letters that we have received already (as I write CRASH issue 1 has only been on sale for a week) and quite a number of you expressed an interest in our comic strip **THE TERMINAL MAN**. So to satisfy your curiosity, here a few details about the two people who make the strip possible.

Artist **Oliver Frey**, who is also designer for CRASH Magazine, has been drawing comic strips for longer than he cares to remember starting off with IPC's *War Picture Library* series of which he did over twenty. Some are being reprinted even now. He has also done a lot of illustrative work for the old *Look & Learn* and drew that publication's strip **The Trigan Empire** for over a year before the comic was stopped. He had a close brush with Superman too. If you've seen the film (the first part that is), perhaps you remember at the very beginning, the little boy reading his Superman comic that then turned into the title sequence? The whole comic book was only two specially drawn pages which Oliver did for director Dick Donner to use in the film.

In recent months Oliver has been busy with several **Dan Dare** strips for the *Eagle* annuals, and has also drawn the weekly version in the comic. In **The Terminal Man**, Oliver has been partly responsible for planting the seed of the idea in the writer's mind.



Oliver Frey poses for a CRASH MICRO publicity still.

Author of the **The Terminal Man** is **Kelvin Gosnell**. Kelvin wanted to be a pilot. Two physical drawbacks thwarted this ambition: less than perfect eyesight (medically undesirable) and a propensity to throw up during aerobatics (undesirable for cleaners of cockpits). He therefore resigned himself to a non-aerial life many years ago and was delighted, shortly afterwards, to discover that he not only enjoyed writing about flying but that people were willing to pay him money to do it.

His writing career started on the comic *Action* in 1975, scripting a World War 1 tale called **Suicide Club**. A long enthusiasm for science fiction was rekindled when he realised there was no SF comic in the UK. The result was the very successful *2000 AD* comic launched in 1978 and a top seller today. Kelvin became its editor.

Since then he has handled a number of strip characters, from **Dan Dare** in the UK to **Storm** in The Netherlands. He continues to handle feature work, particularly in aviation, since he discovered this gets him free flights in an assortment of flying machines. He cannot decide what has been his best aerial experience — playing at the Battle of Britain in a Tiger Moth v Chipmunk dogfight over Kent was good, but so was being 'target for the day' for an RAF rescue Sea King in Norfolk.



A terrified Kelvin Gosnell hangs beneath an RAF rescue Sea King helicopter.

Photography by Ian Kennedy



ER ATA

In last month's issue we gave an incorrect price in the review for GRAND PRIX DRIVER by Britannia. The price of £5.95 quoted should have read £6.95

Also, in our Guide section the review JUNGLE TROUBLE should have ascribed the game firmly to Durrell Software, the producers of the game, as Martech are actually Durrell's distributor and have no hand in the writing or producing of the game. We apologise for our error.

LETTERS »»»»»»»»»

Each month I'll be choosing the best letter from the postbag, and, as well as publishing it, ***I'll send the writer £12 worth of software*** *of his or her choice (it can be two cassettes as long as they come within the £12). I've had to grovel on bended knee to the editor for this, so you'd better be grateful!*

Send your letters to ***Lloyd Mangram, CRASH Forum, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*** *I can't promise to print everything that comes in because space is precious (I'm told) but I'll do my best.*

I am shocked to see just how many letters we have received already. Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining — but aren't you all supposed to be banging away at that collapsing keyboard or something? Still, I guess it's only fair that after us boring you half to death, you should be able to get your own back . . .

Seriously though, thank you for the letters. Quite a lot have made the CRASH team blush to the roots of their dyed hair. There are some that if we printed them would make people believe I made them up. In the event it was a tough task to pick out a winner, especially as some cute cookies offered me bribes in the form of flattery (It'll get you nowhere . . :) After some reflection I thought this plea from Mr. Ashton to treat the simulation game with more respect was the best of some very good letters.

THAT'S HOW IT SHOULD BE

First of all, congratulations on your new magazine. If further issues live up to the first, I am sure it will be a success. Reading your criticisms, I would however like to make a point.

There are basically two types of game — fantasy and real life. Fantasy games, arcades, mazes, dungeons etc, are all all figments of of vivid imagination. Nobody knows how safely Horace can cross the road or how easy it will be to laser an alien space craft. Accordingly, speed is immaterial — the games designer can program the game as fast or slow as he wishes. In all these games the criticism that it is, perhaps, too slow can be valid.

On the other hand the real life games must be as realistic as possible. Yes, motorbikes can travel quickly, aircraft land at speed and accidents happen fast whether the flight is simulated or not.

But please remember one thing — as an ex-R.N. rating I can assure you that submarines *do* dive as slowly as *Hunter-Killer* works.

I have been a table-top wargamer for some years and *Hunter-Killer* seems to me to be the first real, and good, computer war game in the strictest sense of the word. This, to my mind, is a 'real-life' game, and the speed of the sub, the controls that need using etc., are excellent. Torpedoes *do* run that slowly, and that agonising wait that the real submarine Commander goes through is ideally represented here.

If you want fast action, buy either a fantasy game or a real-life game of a fast subject. Please do not dock points from Protek for being amazingly accurate.

W.H. Ashton, Halton-on-Lune, Lancaster.

Thank you for your kind comments, Mr. Ashton. This is the kind of reaction we want to hear from readers. Of course, you are right about **Hunter-Killer**. I'm afraid I'm a poor judge as I am not by any means a dedicated war-gamer, so the slow simulations tend to leave me cold. Unfortunately, a lot of our young reviewers at the moment are dedicated arcade players and less given to the joys of more thought-provoking games perhaps. Hopefully the Reviewers' Competition in the last issue will arouse some adventurers and war-gamers into action on our poor editor's behalf! **LM.**

SOON TO BE

I have just bought the first edition of **CRASH** and I cannot wait for the second one to come out. Although I am not yet a Spectrum owner, I hope to be one soon, as I have had one on order for the past three weeks.

I have also bought a number of other magazines and software reviews, but none of them go into so much detail as **CRASH**. This magazine will certainly help me and I hope many others in choosing the best programs to buy. I also liked the article on interfaces and joysticks and I hope you continue to include items like this each month. All in all, 75p. well spent! Keep up the good work.

D.M. Markillie, Marshall Road, Cambridge.

HACKERS

Just thought I'd write to say what a great mag you're writing. Does that get me the 12 quid? No?? Ah well, we always live in hope! Anyway, at last us Spurtocratic Hackers (Spectrum users with an affinity to modems, alternative databases, shooting many a green man and loud noises) have got a decent magazine that deals specifically with the Spectrum. Many readers may not know it but the best add-on for the Spectrum in my opinion is the **Prism VTX 5000** modem. It's great fun. Especially using Micronet — all that sofware with no postal delays!

As for my favourite software, that has to be *Lunar Jetman*, *Atic Atac* (completed), *Ant Attack* and *Chequered Flag*.

Oh well, I suppose I've said enough, do I get the £12? grovel, grovel!

Stephen Lacey aka The Mad Hacker.

Keep up this unbridled quality of letter writing, Stephen, and you could earn yourself a fortune in no time! — **L.M.**

I own a 48K Spectrum, with which I am very pleased, but I'm already fed up with the keyboard (aren't we all)! I have thought about buying a Fit It Yourself keyboard, but fitting these involves opening up the computer which makes the guarantee invalid. I was wondering whether anyone makes keyboards for the Spectrum which just fit on top of the computer. Or a plug-in keyboard, currently available for the ZX81.

Also I am planning on buying a reconditioned or second-hand colour television to use with my Spectrum. Do you think this is wise? Please could you give me some advice on buying colour televisions. I am currently using the family set which is a Phillips 3745 Teletext colour set and it gives a very good performance. Do Teletext TVs generally give a much better performance?

I think **CRASH** Mag is brill! And having a phone-in chart is fantastic!

Karl Flaschke, Wembley, Middx.

Karl, our technical dept. will be writing soon regarding F.I.Y. meantime, I have a Teletext too but it gives no better result than my little portable colour TV. **LM**

A LONG READ

I've nothing earth-shattering to say about games as I am very new to the scene, but I would like to congratulate you on your superb new magazine. Please don't alter it, it is just perfect the way it is. I've never known a magazine to take me so long to read, not because it was boring but because there was so much information crammed into it. The reviews were the finest and most complete available and are the only ones I'll be reading in future to determine whether or not I buy a game. Even though I only had my Spectrum for Christmas, I spent the previous couple of months buying and reading computer mags to determine which I would continue with once I had my micro.

I thought I had seen the best until seeing your (delayed but worth it) mag, which forced me to change my mind. Keep up the excellent work and best wishes for the future.

Ian Foster, Uttoxeter, Staffs.

Thanks for your comments, Ian. Sorry about the delay too! We had an issue lined up for November 18 last, but there were so many new titles due out before Christmas that the news trade asked us to delay until after the holiday. By the time we knew of this delay it was too late to pull out those two ads that appeared with the earlier date. **LM**

NO LISTINGS

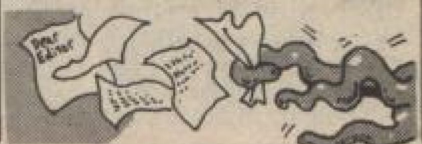
Thanks for the new magazine CRASH. It's just what the majority of Spectrum owners have been waiting for. I hope you don't lose sales because of the name CRASH. I think SPECTRUM should have been part of the title.

Please review utility programs. I'm glad you haven't clutterred up the pages with program listings, which never compare with the commercial games. I don't like comic strips, I'll look to the BEANO for those.

R.J. Hammond, Pickering, N. Yorks.

Some interested newsagents have said the same about CRASH too but we think people will get to know the name soon enough. Utility programs will have an increasing area of CRASH as we go along and will soon be appearing in the Guide Section I'm told. Program Listings were never, ever on the agenda for CRASH! There's just not the room anyway. Sorry about the comic, mind you you won't find something like THE TERMINAL MAN in Beano. The overall plans for the story are extremely interesting — it's going to be quite mammoth. You might argue that it doesn't look though it'll have much to do with computers, but in fact it will, in an indirect way. But more importantly it's intended as a piece of entertainment with strategy, adventure and arcade overtones. I don't see why only Quicksilva should be allowed to get away with the Faluvian Empire! **LM**

Your Letters continue on page 92



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Energy 30,000

Producer: **ELM Computers**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£4.90**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Paul Braithwaite**

The cassette inlay explains that it is the year 30,000 (that's a long, long way off) and you have been recruited by Dr. Minestorm who has discovered that Pink Tar left over in the old mines of the 20th Century can be used as an alternative fuel to Uranium, which is running out. Your task is to mine the Pink Tar by using a bulldozer (bang up to date in the year 30,000). This is done by driving the bulldozer down onto the tar and moving away quickly with it to the fuel store. Ten chunks will fill the quota for that mine, and work then moves onto another.

The mine is infested with creepy crawlies (show us a mine that isn't these days), and if the bulldozer runs into one — it's kapoom

The screen is divided horizontally by four mine shafts (floors really) with a vertical shaft down the centre. There is also a bottom floor. The rock floors actually resemble Pirelli tyre marks, and are made up of numerous little black rocks, with the occasional pink one. Your bulldozer can crawl left and right, descending or returning by the shaft. The screen is wrap around.

CRITICISM

'This is an extremely single minded game — either you'll love it, or you'llhate it. If you like it, it'll probably drive you mad! The bulldozer moves very quickly and positively, so it requires lightning reflexes and a mastery of techniques. What they don't tell you in the inlay is that if you so much as brush a black blob of rock you blow up, and if you manage to drop down (at that speed) accurately on a pink blob, the second you have got it, where it was turns black and — bang! So you learn to get the bulldozer just above the level of the floor, wait for a pink blob and then hit the down and forward key almost simultaneously. So simple, so maddening and utterly addictive.'

'The graphics are nothing to write home about, very simple and quite small, and the game idea is very simple, but because of its speed and the accuracy it demands from the player, I'm sure this is going to appeal to a lot of snappy arcade players.'

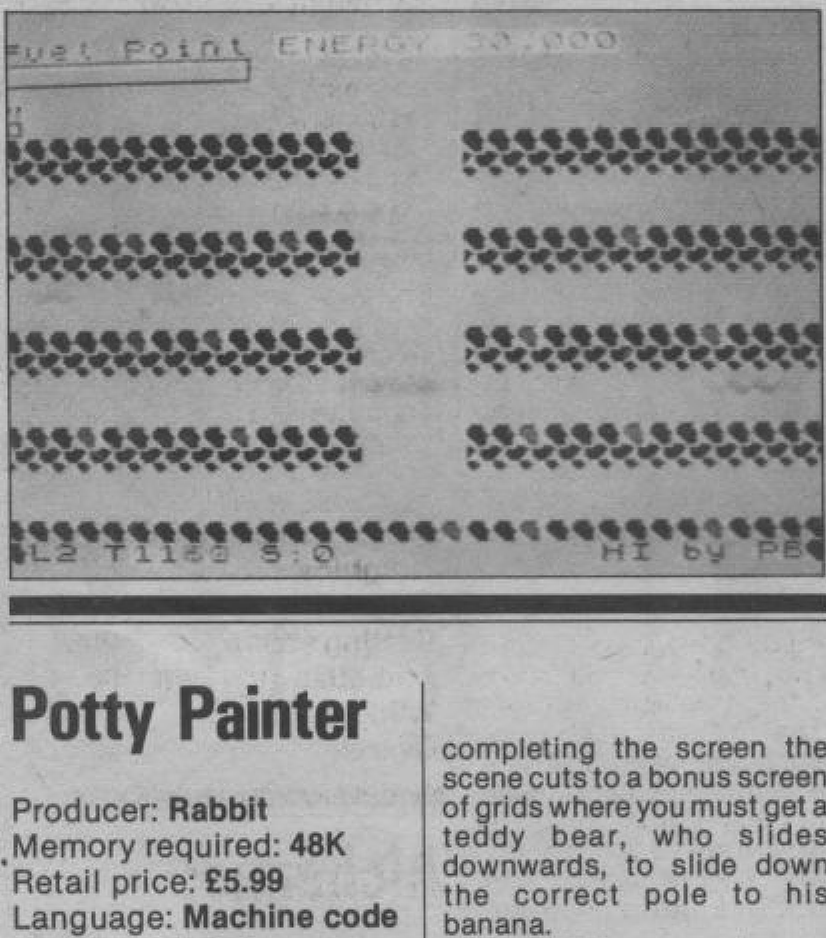
'The least of your problems are the creepie crawlies, although just when you're one chunk away from a quota, and sailing back up the shaft, you can be sure a wretched thing will snake out and wallop you. Ever so fast, and requires hair trigger responses, which fortunately the keys provide, but the fingers don't always! Good value.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z/X left/right, I/J up/down, well laid out
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: highly responsive
Colour: average
Graphics: fairly small, simple and perfectly adequate
Sound: good
Skill levels: gets impossible after being hard
Lives: 3
General rating: Maddening, addictive, good value.

Use of computer	68%
Graphics	60%
Playability	80%
Getting started	63%
Addictive qualities	95%
Value for money	70%
Overall	**73%**

One of the blurs is your bulldozer in fast, addictive Energy 30,000.



Potty Painter

Producer: **Rabbit**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.99**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **J.F. Cain**

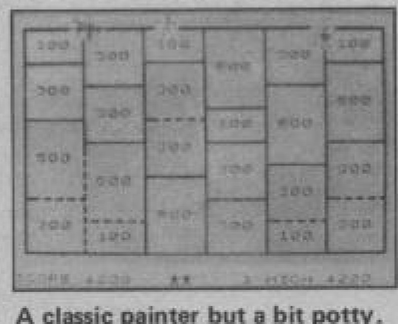
Potty Painter is an 'Armidar' paint the squares copy with three screens. The screen is divided up into 24 rectangles, six columns of four shapes all defined by dotted lines. Each box contains a score figure, 100, 300 or 500 depending on its area. You must walk your monkey along the dotted lines until a square has been surrounded, when it changes colour and you get the points. As this is going on there are two nasties chasing you. On completing the screen the scene cuts to a bonus screen of grids where you must get a teddy bear, who slides downwards, to slide down the correct pole to his banana.

The third screen is very similar to the first except that you are a paint roller now and the chasers are two teddy bears. Another mean trick is that there is a time limit which eats away the value of the rectangles, so it's important to complete as many as you can in the least possible time. Completing this screen takes you back to the start screen again but with three chasers this time round. In some visual respects this game looks similar to **Romik's** *Colour Clash.*

CRITICISM

'This isn't a particularly attractive looking game, although that is more the fault of the game type than the program, which uses a nice mix of colours. Just that the dotted lines tend to make it look like a job centre form to fill out! Overall I found it very playable, but it would have been better if there had been some speed selections, which might have given it a longer life; and some sound would have helped.'

'The game is a fair copy of the original, with reasonable graphics, the nasties especially so. The sound is rather sparse, just a beep when you're caught. The game is mildly addictive, it's not original, but if you like arcade copies, then it is adequate.'



A classic painter but a bit potty.

'For someone who has never played this type of game in the arcades, I think it would have been better to say more about it in the inlay than it actually does. On the whole I thought this was a reasonable copy of what is

now a fairly old arcade game — not bad, not wonderful either. The user-definable keys are a great help.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors, or user-definable, 4 directions required
Joystick: AGF, Protek
Keyboard play: responsive
Colour: reasonable
Graphics: average to good
Sound: poor
Skill levels: gets harder each round
Lives: 5
General rating: average, but reasonable addictive

Use of computer	**68%**
Graphics	**55%**
Playability	**58%**
Getting started	**60%**
Addictive qualities	**57%**
Value for money	**59%**
Overall	**60%**

Android 2

Producer: **Vortex**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Costa Panayi**

In the film industry they tend to say that sequels are never as good as the originals, whereas in computer games the opposite seems to be true. If you bought and played **Android 1**, then you may be in for a shock with **Android 2** — it's not only better, it's staggeringly better! A lot of recent releases have featured wonderful graphics and it's unfair to compare one with another when the graphics often have to do different things, but overall our reviewers thought Android 2 had just about the best, possibly as good as any other game for the Spectrum to date.

The story is as old as the Spectrum itself — stop the advance of the Millitoids, survive the maze of death, rationalise the paradox zone, overcome the dangers of the flatlands and achieve all this before the departure deadline. No problem! Vortex describe this as a mindblowing action game, and deservedly so.

It's hard to describe the screen display, because the area is huge, part massively convoluted maze, part open space within areas of the encompassing maze. The view is solid 3D, seen from well above and slightly to one side. The attract mode scrolls at a furious pace in a diagonal direction across the playing area, and gives a frightening idea of what is ahead of you.

The object is to destroy five Millitoids in each of the three zones. These otherwise pleasant creatures require three shots to the head. In carrying out this mission you must watch out for the numerous land mines, Hoverdroids (one blast), and Bouncers, which are indestructible but very predictable. **Android 2** is equipped with a head mounted photon blaster of unlimited power — he needs it! Good luck!

CRITICISM

'If you have seen 3D Ant Attack then you will know that the graphics are great but that the game itself is not so good, well **Android 2** is a game with great 3D graphics and is also a good game in itself. The animation is good, a well laid out screen, and generally a great shoot'em up game.'

Android 2 — the a-mazing superior Robot.



'Every detail of this game has been polished, even the instructions are beautifully done. The sound is excellent and very characterful. It's such a massive undertaking that I'm sure people will be playing it for ages without ever getting anywhere near exploring all the maze. You have to watch out for mean landmines, especially in passages where the floor is obscured by the perspective view. Addictive because of the game idea and the fantastic graphics.'

'The game is very challenging, in fact I found it hard and good to play. Good graphics, with lots of movement and good value for money.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 1/Q up/down, O/P left/right, bottom row = fire
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: very responsive
Colour: excellent
Graphics: excellent
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: who needs 'em?
Lives: 5
Screens: continuously scrolling
General rating: excellent on almost all counts, highly addictive and first rate value for money. Highly recommended.

Use of computer	**80%**
Graphics	**96%**
Playability	**92%**
Getting started	**90%**
Addictive qualities	**90%**
Value for money	**89%**
Overall	**90%**

Alchemist

Producer: **Imagine**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Ian Weatherburn**

This is **Imagine's** first step into the mist-shrouded world of terror and mystery, Warlocks and monsters, Wizards and spells. It still isn't a proper adventure, much more of an arcade type game, but with adventure overtones. You, the most skilful Alchemist on Earth, have been summoned to do battle with the Evil Warlock who is terrorising the Land. You must enter his dread castle, find the four sections of the magic scroll, which will enable you to render the Warlock powerless by using his own Spell of Destruction against him.

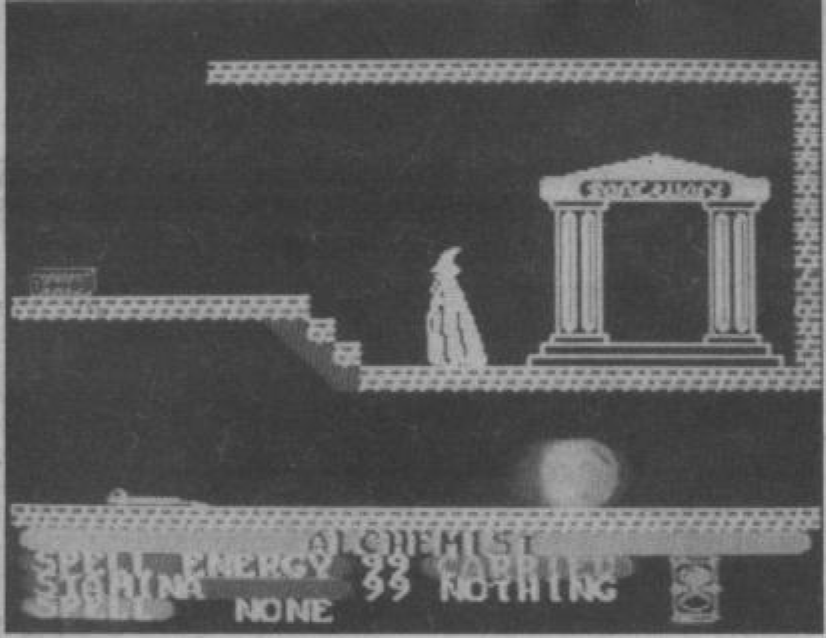
Playing the game is quite a complicated matter. The Alchemist can wander about as himself until he reaches a drop or a steep hill, and these obstacles may be overcome by transforming into an eagle, which is made to fly by flapping its wings. The dread castle is full of rooms, caverns, passageways and stairs, filled with a wide variety of monsters, useful objects and minor spells which may be used once, and of course the four pieces of the magic scroll. The Alchemist is only allowed to carry one object at a time (and he's the most skilful!) so a strategy element creeps in.

Any type of movement, or bumping into objects, or transformations, deplete your stamina. This is maintained by passing over food packs (if you were an evil warlock keeping skilful Alchemists at bay, would you leave food packs lying around your castle)?

The two weapons you possess, hurling lightning bolts or casting spells if you have found one, use up your energy, which is replenished only by time. Encounters with monsters also drain you, though this depends on whether you are carrying some useful object like an axe or a sword. So there it is, O Skilful One — care to have a go?

CRITICISM

'On your mission you will encounter many problems, like finding a key to open a door, and many Guardians such as lobsters, ghosts, brooms, skulls, bats, evil butterflies, swords which attack you, snails, caterpillars, bones, axes, a boulder and much more. The presentation is very good, with a high quality title screen and adequate instruction, although a bit more advice would not go amiss! The graphics are very good and so is the sound, with a rather spooky organ tune which sets the scene well. In playing, the game is extremely good, fun and very addictive. Definitely another



Time is running out for the Alchemist. . . .

winner for Imagine. Oh, by the way — don't pick up the trap thinking you can use it as one — it will explode during the game, destroying you!'

'The Alchemist is an original game which is fun to play, not only because it is difficult, but because it also has exceptional graphics, lots of them, all well designed and animated. Controlling the game requires a handful of keys which take some mastering, but they seem quite well laid out. The game is not unlike Atic Atac in feeling, and has about the same level of playability. Although it couldn't be called a shoot em up, it still manages to be very addictive, since it is so easy to lose your one life.'

'This is a game which is fun and has so much detail to explore in the massive castle that it makes you want to keep playing. That said, I didn't think it was terribly addictive, although I'll probably want to go back after some time and have another go. Excellent graphics and use of colour. An Imagine-ative game and obviously worth the money.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: seven keys are used to walk/fly left and right, transform, cast a spell/hurl lightning, flap wings, pick up/drop objects and pick up/drop spells. The Quit key (1) seemed dangerously near the other action keys.
Joystick: Kempston, Fuller
Colour: very good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 1
Screens: continuous scrolling
General rating: excellent

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	85%
Playability	90%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	89%
Value for money	95%
Overall	85%

Chuckie Egg

Producer: **A & F Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.90**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **N. Alderton**

A & F have added to the mythology of the Platform Game with their **Chuckie Egg**, which contains some of the best screen combinations since the original arcade versions of 'Donkey Kong'. The aim of the game is simplicity in itself. You are a little yellow — well chicken it looks like, but probably a li'l 'ol farmer boy, with a wide brimmed hat, and you must travel the wide platforms collecting eggs, whilst avoiding the understandably agitated chickens. Depending on the screen, there are various combinations of long and short platforms at different heights, connected with ladders and/or lifts.

As you go through the screens so the set ups become more difficult, with more eggs to collect and more hens chasing, and more piles of — hen manure, to put it politely, to avoid.

CRITICISM

'This game has a very good use of colour, very good, bright graphics, neatly animated and detailed. It has you climbing ladders, jumping over holes, jumping down from one level to another, riding lifts, and generally collecting eggs like a maniac. I found it fun and addictive! It also gives you user-definable keys and games for up to four players.'

'This is hardly a new game type, but it's certainly an excellent addition to the collection of holejumpingladderclimbingnastyavoiding games for the Spectrum. What makes it addictive, apart from the very good graphics and sound, is the construction of the various platforms. These soon get to be very complicated, and like the best arcade originals, you must plan your way round carefully. The control keys are highly responsive, your man jumping beautifully, even reversing direction in mid-jump if you time it right. Very addictive and nicely frustrating.'

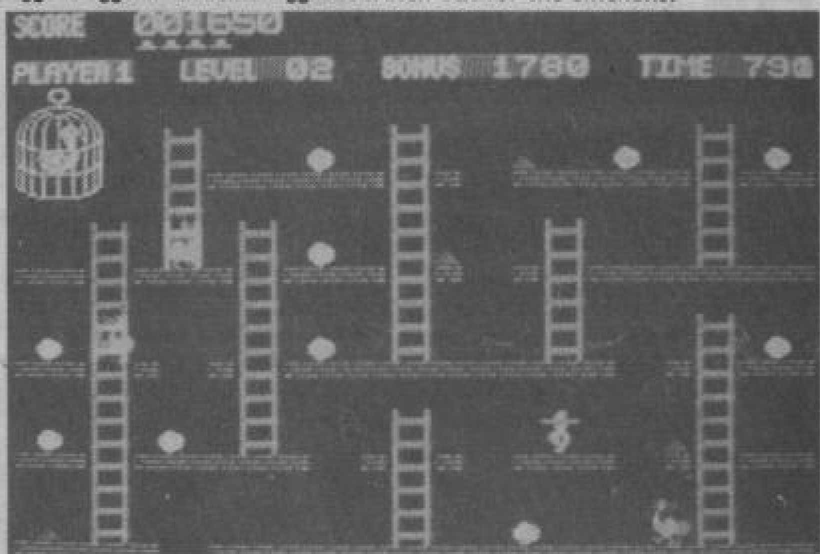
'I had a lot of trouble at first getting my man to climb or descend ladders, but this is a trick of the program. He's very difficult to centre if you're being careful about lining up, whereas if you dash at a ladder and have the ascend/descend key also pressed, he whizzes straight up as desired. What must be remembered is to change directional keys while whizzing, or he may end up going in the wrong direction at the top of the ladder. One kindness is that he can withstand some tremendous falls from one level to another. An excellent arcade game, with high addictivity built in. But it's very expensive at almost £8 — the one drawback.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: user-definable, 4 direction and one jump needed.
Joystick: Can be set up to cope with most and works with Fuller anyway.
Keyboard play: highly responsive
Colour: very good
Graphics: very good
Sound: continuous and good
Skill levels: gets harder with every screen
Lives: 5
Features: speech vocabulary with Fuller Box, and 1/2/3/4 player games
General rating: highly addictive, and very good.

Use of computer	90%
Graphics	80%
Playability	85%
Getting started	78%
Addictive qualities	80%
Value for money	65%
Overall	80%

Eggs is eggs in Chuckie Egg but watch out for the chickens.

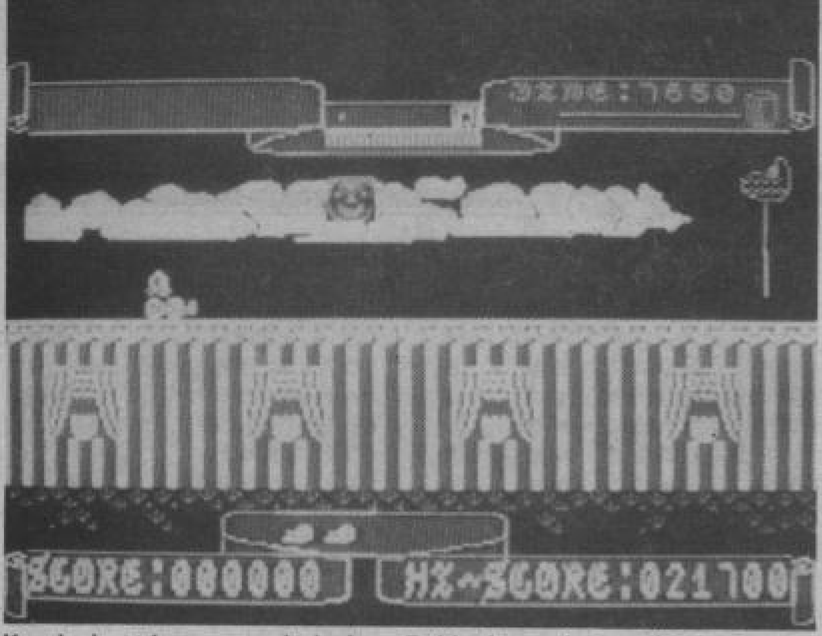


Punchy

Producer: **Mr. Micro**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.90**
Language: **Machine code**

Punch & Judy shows probably still exist at the British seaside, but there's no longer any need to travel afield to see a show. **Mr. Micro** can now bring you all the glitter and sand, right at home on your Spectrum. This game has similarities with *Hunchback*, but it is all couched in proper Punch & Judy terms — and it speaks!

The playing area is a very expanded and colourful puppet stage which makes up 16 screens, at the end of which Punch has Judy locked up. You are the hero, Bobby, and



Knocked out by a custard pie, hero Bobby hears the horrible laughter of the theatrical mask above — That's the way to do it!

you must rescue Judy by jumping over or ducking under rotten tomatoes thrown by Punch, leap over gaps, use the flying carpet, swing from the angels' tails and avoid the back-attacking custard pies, whilst leaping over gaps filled with soldiers and clubs. Every once in a while Judy will throw a sausage. If Bobby catches three of these they can be used in an emergency to transport him to the next screen without harm.

A scanner above the stage shows Bobby's progress. Each screen is timed for points and each one completed awards a policeman's helmet. For every five helmets collected, a bonus is added. A neat feature is that without any added hardware, the program talks — 'That's the way to do it,' or, more famously, 'Rock the baby, rock the baby.'

CRITICISM

'It's a very long load, but well worth it. The graphics must be among the most eye-searingly bright I've seen on a game! All the status details are contained in decorative scrolls, written in gothic text. I really liked the evil little theatrical mask 'face' that appears in the clouds and laughs when you lose a life. The game itself is reasonably difficult to play, with timing an essential part, and it gets extremely difficult when there are tomatoes coming from one direction and custard pies from another! Bobby jumps very well, although it takes a bit of practice as this is a very laid back hero! Very good value.'

'The unique thing about this game is that it speaks understandable English without hardware. The use of colour is excellent and the graphics are smooth and very good. Apart from the speech there are very good tunes. The whole thing comes very nicely packaged too, with good instructions on the inlay and on-screen. You can see the task ahead of you with the very good demo. It really is great. Just buy it!'

'Nice simple keys to control Bobby, and a difficult game. Perhaps it gets a bit repetetive after a while, but it's certainly amusing to play and the graphics combined with the speech make it almost worth the money alone.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 6/7 walk left/right, zero = jump, 8 = sausages!
Joystick: Kempston and will work with Sinclair ZX 2
Keyboard play: positive, though jumping takes some practice
Colour: excellent
Graphics: very good
Sound: excellent speech and tunes, though a little bare during a screen
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3 (1 more after 60,000 points)
Screens: 16
Features: programmed speech
General rating: excellent

Use of computer	91%
Graphics	85%
Playability	90%
Getting started	88%
Addictive qualities	87%
Value for money	85%
Overall	**88%**

I'm In Shock

Producer: **Artic**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£4.95**
Language: **Machine code**

So this was what we were returning to; a scarred battlefield and ashes. We'd travelled across the universe to save the Earth, we'd seen off the invaders and suffered the casualties, only to find it had all been a decoy.

So *I'm In Shock* sets the scene for this grid/shoot em up game. You can move your laser base left and right, while shooting up. The screen is divided into one character squares by green grid lines with you (and the aliens above) sitting in the squares. The number of aliens depends on how many waves you have killed off. They move about randomly, very slowy descending. Should one reach the bottom the game is over. Some squares have diagonal lines filling them, which cause your shots to rebound at right angles, whereas the aliens can fire through them quite happily. This requires some strategical thinking to use the shields to double rebound and thus still hit an alien. Every 3 screens, a command ship, resembling a spider, crawls across the screen half way up, and scores a bonus if you hit it.

Wide frozen shrieks of laughter — I'm in Shock!



CRITICISM

'The graphics are quite small and simple and the keys are over-responsive, making it very hard to move to an adjacent square. The game itself is quite reasonable, but something of an anti-climax after reading the intro on the inlay — "The moon was the colour of wide frozen shrieks of laughter, the frost ran down the window — I'm in shock." See what I mean.'

'I thought the graphics and colour were generally rather poor, and the game, though an original idea, does tend to get repetetive and is very easy to play.'

'I like the energy reflectors, they added a dimension of strategy to an otherwise very ordinary shoot em up. But the alien craft could have been a bit more energetically nasty, it would have made the game more interesting to play. Very difficult to control small movements of the laser base too.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: very simple, CAPS — V left, B — SPACE right, H — ENTER fire
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: fast and over-responsive
Use of colour: poor
Graphics: average, small, l-character size
Sound: good
Skill levels: 5
Lives: 3
General rating: fair to average, but reasonable value for money.

Use of computer	58%
Graphics	47%
Playability	52%
Getting started	62%
Addictive qualities	50%
Value for money	58%
Overall	55%

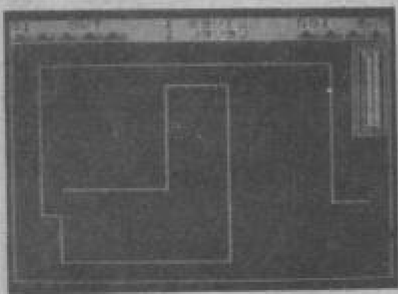
Supersnails

Producer: **Games Machine**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **David Hay**

Despite a story about Doctor Van Winkelhoff who has genetically engineered snails imported from West Africa into a breed of Supersnails who leave super

glue trails behind them, and are now trapped in his laboratory trying to escape, this game turns out to be a 'Light Cycle' grid type game made famous byu the movie *Tron*.

The aim of the game is to trap your oponent and kill him or her off by forcing him into a wall, your trail or his own trail. If you succeed in this, a hole opens up in the wall and allows you to escape. There are four directional controls for your snail, and in common with other games like it, hitting reverse of the direction in which you are currently travelling is instant death.



Superglue trails in the lab.

CRITICISM

'The thing that most impressed me about this game is that two players can play against each other at the same time, or two players can play against the computer as well as one playuer against the computer. The inlay card explains all this very well, and it is repeated in menu form on screen. It is a simple idea, but that makes it all the more playable on the lower speeds. At the highest level the speed makes it unplayable!

'This game has the most simple graphics I have ever seen — just white lines on a blue ground. It's simple but it is highly addictive.'

'If you buy games as much for their colour and graphics (as anything else) then you may as well forget **Supersnails.** If, on the other hand, you enjoy a fast, utterly single-minded game, then this is about the best version around. The lines move extremely smoothly (only pixels after all) and I think I'm right in saying that this is the only 8-directional version, which opens up the game's tactics quite a bit.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: player one, Q/A up/down, Z/X left/right: player two, P/L up/down, M/SYM. SHIFT left/right
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: very responsive
Colour: sparse!
Graphics: extremely simple but very fast
Sound: continuous but poor
Skill levels: 9 speeds
Features: 1 or 2 players against each other or the computer
General rating: above average to good, addictive.

Use of computer	71%
Graphics	34%
Playability	70%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qulities	74%
Value for money	60%
Overall	63%

Microbot

Producer: **Softek**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Andrew Beale**

Andrew Beale has done a number of games for **Softek** and this one will probably be accounted as among the best. It has similarities in its scenario with the 'you're inside this computer' school. In this, possibly your millionth re-incarnation now, you are a microbot, a miniaturised robot, whose task is to enter the electronic brains of proper-sized robots and repair damage to them. The scenario points out that you wanted to be either a Brain Surgeon or a truck driver, and as you could't possibly meet the necessary specifications, you had to become a Brain Surgeon!

A nice touch about this game is that the inside of these highly advanced but somewhat brain-damaged robots resembles the basement of some huge and rambling Victorian mansion with unlagged heating pipes. There are two types of pipe — purple ones and green ones (scenario explains the difference, but it's all far too high in technology to repeat here) and there are various bugs which are causing damage to the delicate electronic brain. Despite their varied shapes they come in two hues — blue and yellow (this is important, but wait for it).

Your job as microbot is to prowl around armed with repulsa blobs and fix the pipes. The repulsa blobs keep the nasties at bay for a mo, but lying around in each brainy chamber are blue and yellow fix-a-tive blobs. Touching one turns microbot into that colour, and if he fires a blob of the correct hue at a nasty of the same colour, the blob will destroy it. But despite all these fun and games, the true nature of the coloured blobs is to fix the pipes. When fired close up a blue blob will fix a damaged purple pipe, and a yellow blob fixes a green pipe. Once used the fix-a-tives are instantly replaced ready for picking up again.

The brain consists of twelve chambers, and can be seen to the left of the playing area in plan form. This scanner also informs you of where the worst damage is being done by colour coding. It's frightening!

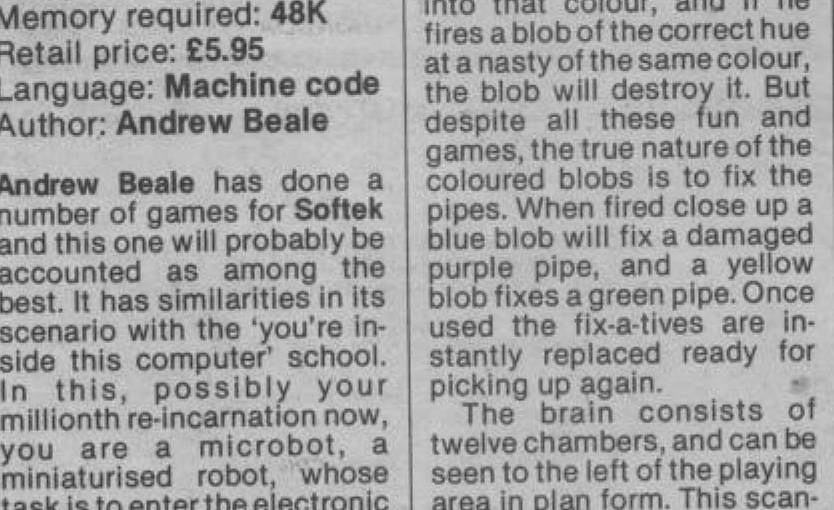
CRITICISM

'Fixing holes in the pipes made by the nasties is not so easy, I found that this only worked if you bumped into the hole several times and then fired the fix-a-tive ball at point blank range. The graphics are very good with a number of animated bugs (there's a yellow Pac Man on legs in there somewhere) the game is fine, but there was something about it that made it not as much as it could be. Just a feeling, it's still a good and interesting game and highly original.'

'Graphics in Spectrum games have got to be so good in the last few months that it's easy to forget how primitive they were only recently. In Microbot *the scenery is mostly angled pipes on black, quite simple, yet they are very good pipes. You wouldn't have seen pipes like those only a year ago! The creepies are good, too, and well animated. Microbot himself moves swiftly, but getting the hang of the game techniques takes some time, and could have been explained better. I shall certainly go back and get better.'*

'Nice large graphics and very smoothly moving. Not too sure about the overall qualities of the game — it grew on me with playing, but I get the feeling there aren't quite enough objectives involved to make it very addictive, although it is fun to play. I got a bit irritated with the finickiness of fixing holes, and it seems a pity that the blue and yellow blobs can only be fired sideways when the damned bugs move all over the place. An original game.'

Broken pipes and brain damage in Microbot.



COMMENTS

Control keys: A/Z up/down, O/P left/right, M = fire
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair, AGF, Protex
Keyboard play: responsive
Colour: good
Graphics: good
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: 12
General rating: very good

Use of computer	73%
Graphics	80%
Playability	70%
Getting started	65%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	80%
Overall	73%

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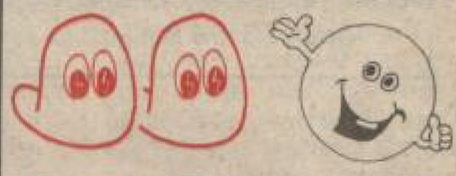
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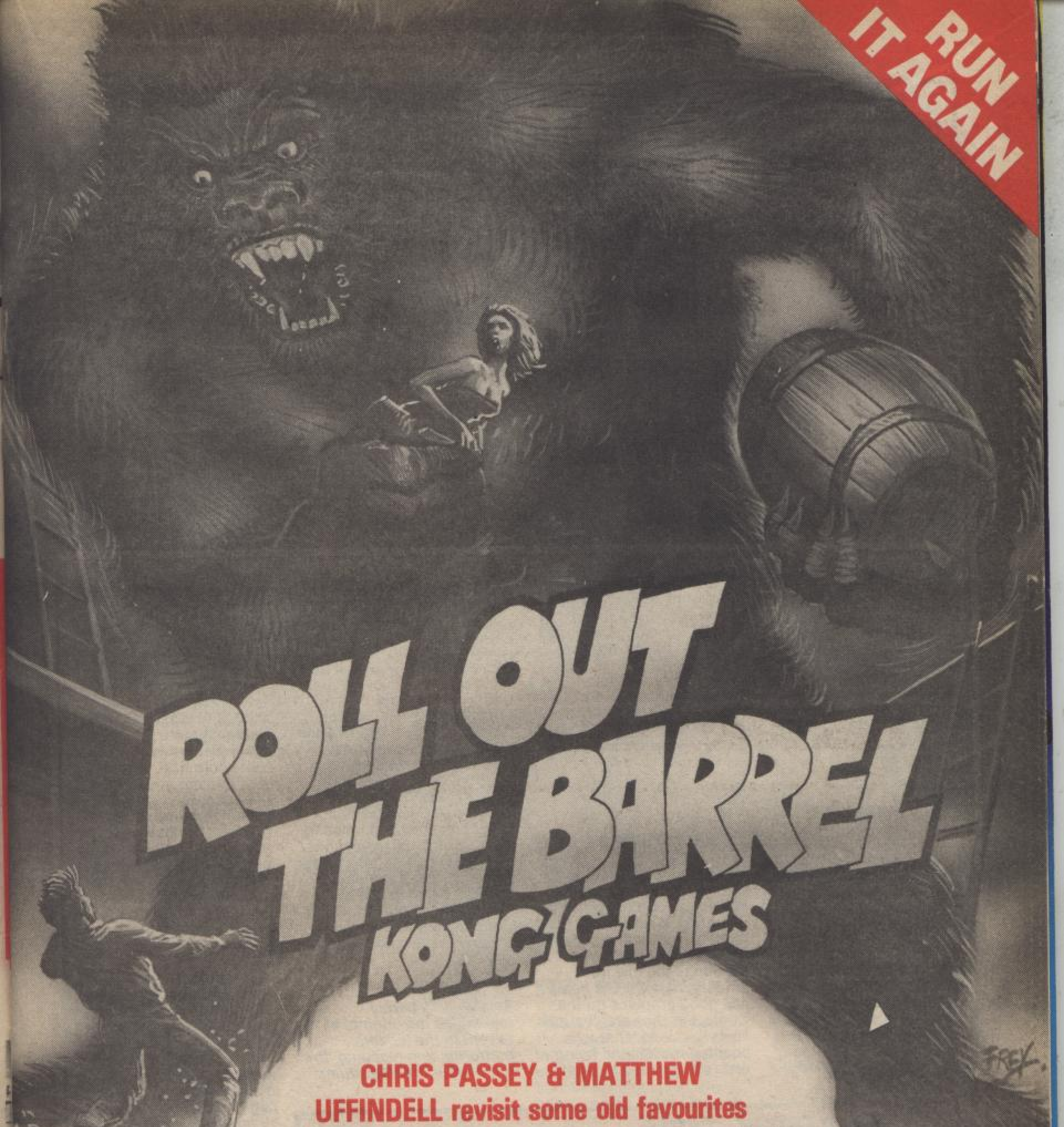
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'Superb high resolution with smooth scrolling ... with the nights drawing in this program should give you plenty to think about' ***Micro Adventure Dec 83***
'The graphics are smooth, startling and exciting. They show the way for the development of the graphics adventure in the next year' ***Sinclair User Annual 84***
'Each quest is selected by you at the beginning of the game and you will have five game days in which to complete it. The time factor is exceptional in adventure games' ***Sinclair User Dec 83***

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ROLL OUT THE BARREL
KONG GAMES

CHRIS PASSEY & MATTHEW UFFINDELL revisit some old favourites (and some new versions) in our second Game Type comparisons

Ever since Mario lost his girl to the clutches of King Kong, there's been trouble up at t'Empire State Building! Quite how the particular story line for the original game emerged is now lost in the mythology of what the arcades called *Donkey Kong* or *Krazy Kong*, Their popularity in the arcades was probably due to their non-violence and perhaps because people had become fed up with shoot the invaders games.

The simple object of the game is to reach the top of the screen and 'rescue' your girl from Kong's clutches. To do this you must run along several levels of platforms and climb ladders while Kong rolls barrels and fireballs down on top of you. This recipe should ideally continue for several screens of increasing difficulty. There are several versions for the Spectrum ranging from bad to very good, and the selection here (which is very representative) contains two titles which masquerade as something else, but are still Kong type games really.



KONG (Ocean)

Ocean's Kong is a close copy to the original. It starts off well with Kong making his entry, climbing to the top, then stomping and causing the girders to slope. Now the ape starts the barrels rolling. They go sideways down the ladders Killer Kong's seemed to favour falling through holes). There are a total of four screens, featuring fireballs and elevators as well. The graphics in this game are the best of all, and are large (terrifyingly large barrels), well animated and fast. The man jumps well, in fact he goes so high his head passes through the next floor up. The keys are well laid out, it's Kempston compatible and there's a training mode.
CP

It takes a long time to load, but it's worth the wait. A screen appears with five options, keyboard, Kempston joystick, Quickshot and Protek interfaces, demo mode and training mode. All four screens are identical to the arcade original — even the detail of the ape smashing down the girders into different angles at the start. Graphics are big, bright and smooth with just the right amount of ladders. Even the hammer on the second platform is there, to enable you to smash the barrels for bonus points. None of the other games has this feature. Tunes are played at the start and end of a screen, and at the start it says, 'How high can you get?' — just like the original. I think this Kong is the best one.
MU

KILLER KONG (Blaby)

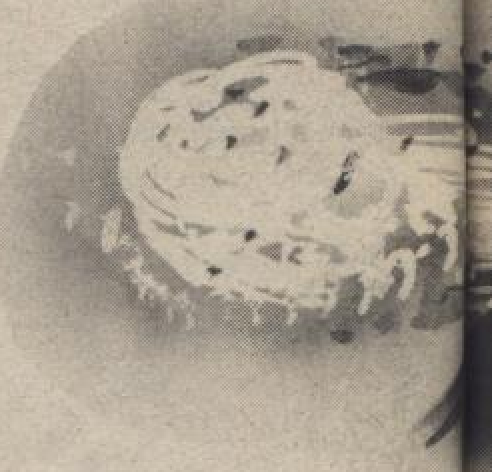
I thought this was a good version. Here there are five screens to complete — all are difficult. It requires the most skill in timing because the last bit of the top section is too low for jumping barrels. The game has good graphics on the whole, but they aren't supersmooth due to 'character position movement' being used as opposed to pixel type. This game, however, has the best sound. Keyboard play could be improved — the keys are all along the top row. There are bonuses for getting green burgers and also a time bonus. I would recommend this version.
CP

Killer Kong is a version with many ladders and is not at all like the original really. It is just a miss-the-fireball game, though I found it very playable. The jumps need to be timed right (like Anirog's version) because the graphics aren't smooth. I can say the sound is great and the colour is well used. It's much more addictive than Anirog's version and has more joystick options.
MU

GODZILLA & THE MARTIANS

This one has the most original title and also the classiest packaging, but it is also the worst of the bunch, primarily because it's written in BASIC, which immediately limits the program's capabilities (it's also the only 16K version). The idea is to run along and jump over the martians (resembling invading barrels) which move from side to side. There are also ladders to climb on your way to the top and holes to jump. (Godzilla, meanwhile, is protecting your girl — not 'holding' her). Only one screen and only one life. The graphics are jerky, and jumping is a hit-and-miss affair. On the whole, very unaddictive.
CP

This version barely resembles the original at all except in the ladders, platforms and rescuing 'the girl of your dreams'. Jump control is very bad, unresponsive — just up, over and down — terrible. The graphics are limited and the keys poorly positioned. Sound and colour are also poor (all in BASIC), no joystick options and generally well below today's standards.
MU



KONG (Anirog)

A different story here — this is more of a Kong copy and quite reasonable. It contains quite good graphics and is possibly the most colourful. The keys are well laid out, making it very playable. Four screens featuring barrels, fireballs, lifts etc. Bonuses are available in the form of umbrellas and handbags, and there's a time limit to deter waiting around. The jumping is rather quick and needs careful timing though.
CP

This version doesn't start off too well — no screen page, and the inlay says nothing about joystick options although once loaded it informs you that it's Kempston compatible (sigh — unplug computer, fit interface and reload). A demo autoruns after 30 seconds. Screen 1 looks like screen 2 of the arcade original except there are no conveyor belts. Screen 2 is very much like screen 1 but with more ladders leading up to the next platform. There are lifts on the third screen, but only the fourth screen looks like the original, where you must pull blocks out of the floor and watch Kong fall. The demo had nice smooth graphics, but the game didn't. I found the jump disappointing — you must jump when a fireball is right

KONG COMPARISON TABLE

We asked our two reviewers to rate the games compared on a scale from 0 to 100.

A — Use of computer

B — Graphics

C — Playability

D — Addictive qualities

E — Value for money

F — Retail price (in £)

		A	B	C	D	E	F
GODZILLA & THE MARTIANS	CP	12	20	10	20	15	5.95
	MU	0	0	0	0	0	
KILLER KNIGHT	CP	23	50	19	30	40	5.95
	MU	20	20	10	20	20	
KONG (Anirog)	CP	60	78	50	70	75	5.95
	MU	60	65	46	34	50	
KILLER KONG	CP	80	90	90	100	90	5.50
	MU	70	70	60	60	80	
KONG (Ocean)	CP	92	100	100	97	100	5.90
	MU	100	100	100	100	100	
KRAZY KONG (P.S.S.)	CP	75	90	95	95	90	5.95
	MU	90	90	98	95	90	



against you, or you'll land on top of it. The colour and sound is well used, and a fair game can be played on this version, although I think Anirog have overdone it on the ladders.
MU

KILLER KNIGHT

Apart from *Krazy Kong*, this is the only version with a loading screen picture. The game itself is a variation on the Kong theme — rescue your girl from the clutches of the evil black knight. There's the usual barrels and holes to jump and ladders to climb. Also a handy umbrella to break and accidental fall (once). The game is very fast, probably the fastest of the lot, but the graphics are rather small and colourless. Jumping is sudden and control generally is difficult due to speed and poor keyboard layout. Ladder climbing is automatic, so there's no going back! This is a difficult game to play (not a bad thing), but with its uninspiring graphics and lack of playability, I didn't really enjoy it.
CP

I found Killer Knight very difficult to play because jump control is very difficult. I know I've said the same about the Anirog Kong and Killer Kong, but here there seems to be no 'feel' to the jump, perhaps because it happens so quickly. Poor sound and even worse colour drops this game's value. I also get the feeling this is compiled m/c — the poor block graphics with uninteresting UDGs make it not worth considering if you are after a real Kong game.
MU

KRAZY KONG (P.S.S.)

This is quite a close copy of the arcade *Krazy Kong* and includes barrels, fireballs, conveyor belts and lifts. The barrels drop through the platforms randomly as well as descending the ladders on top of you. The man is well animated and jumps very generously (which doesn't mean it's easy)! I didn't like the key positions — all on the top row. There is a time limit for a bonus and water buckets for bonuses. Nice loading screen which matches the cassette inlay. Four screens in this version with well combined hazards.
CP

P.S.S.'s version, which has only just come out, is very like the arcade original. Your man is well animated and walks smoothly on his way to rescue the girl. All the characters are a bit small but nothing to complain about, and the man jumps very well. The game is colourful, tuneful and very playable — second to Ocean's Kong in fact. All the keys are well positioned — could be used with Sinclair Interface 2 but not stated anywhere (Kempston compatible). Ocean's version comes out with flying colours, closely followed by this one.
MU

Next Month: Missile Command

News Update

sinclair

SINCLAIR TALKS TO CRASH

Details have just been arranged for **Alison Maguire,** Software Manager for **Sinclair,** to be interviewed by three **CRASH** reviewers and readers. By the time you read this, the interview will have taken place on the 9th February at Sinclair's London Offices. The interview will be published in next month's **CRASH.**



ABACUS ARCADE PACK

The multi-digited gamesters, **Abacus**, have just released a four-game pack under the name *Space Odyssey*. The four games are *Sentinel*, *Fireflash*, *Avenger* and *Proteus*, and they all form a continuing arcade story. *Avenger* sold 40,000 copies, while *Sentinel* remained in Smith's top ten for months. *Fireflash* received a rave CRASH review in last month's issue. Author **Kevin Flynn** has recently completed *Proteus*, which unfortunately we can't review until next month due to pressures of space. Abacus are still selling the game separately at £5.95 each but you can buy all four games in the 'arcade pack' for only **£14.95** — a saving of almost £9.

The Quill Drips Gold

Gilsoft, whose adventure writing utility *The Quill* has been responsible for helping many authors produce Adventure Games across a range of software houses in recent months, have announced a series of Adventure Games for the 48K Spectrum.

The series is called *The Gold Collection* and contains eight titles. One is yet to be announced, but the others are *Magic Castle* and *Diamond Trail*, which have been out for some time, (and were the first to be written with The Quill). *Africa Gardens, The Adventures of Barsak the Dwarf, Spy Plane, Devil's Island* and *Mindbender*.

Africa Gardens by **Tom Davies** takes its name from the hotel featured in the game and is set at the turn of the century. It has graphics and displays The Quill's versatility with UDG's and block graphics. *Barsak the Dwarf* is written by **P & V Napolitano**. You must help Barsak collect nine treasures of his forefathers and "it" is set in a mythological underworld. *Spy Plane* has by **D. Brammer**, has an unusual setting for an adventure in as much as the game takes place



in the plane and **over** the locations. You're flying over locations set in the Arzelan sea, gaining military intelligence. It should be realistic as the author is a pilot and used to be in the RAF. *Devil's Island* by **Colin Smith** poses you the problem of escaping from the infamous French island prison. You must face the prison guards, the jungle and unfriendly natives, find a boat and escape to the mainland. *Mindbender* by **B. Jenkinson** has you suddenly transported by aliens using some mysterious ray to their underground base. You have the mental power to resist and escape, and your task is to locate the source of the ray and destroy it. This game starts off, apparently, with a description which includes a desk with a Quill sitting on it!

All titles in the *Gold Collection* will be available individually, priced £5.95 each and Gilsoft hope to have them ready for release sometime in February this month in their own distinctive packaging.

MICROMEGA SCREENS IN BOOTS

Shops are normally too busy to be able to demonstrate games to their customers, but software house, **Micromega**, are making attempts to alter that. They have recently set up demonstration stands in two of the larger **Boots** stores where there are large computer sections.

The demonstrations have taken place at Boots' branches in **Portsmouth** and **Slough**, and involved two members of staff with six Spectrums and screens. A spokesperson for Micromega told us that the idea had proved popular, and that in discussions with Boots there had been an informal agreement to expand the service to other stores across the country.

Boots carry all four Micromega products, *Haunted Hedges, Luna Crabs, Starclash* and, of course, the fabulous *Deathchase*. Micromega see the demonstration stands as a part of company support for their games as they do no mail order, only supplying retail outlets directly and through distributors like Websters. The call for games has been enormous. Only the Thursday before Christmas Websters asked for several thousand copies of *Deathchase* and Micromega made a super human effort and was able to deliver them before lunch the next day.

The next game from the company, as we reported in last month's issue, is another Derek Brewster title, which he gave a working title of *Invasion 2000*. At the moment, Micromega haven't decided what to call it, but they told us that it is going to be a big seller.

JET SET FROLICS

After a visit to deepest **Woolton** (Liverpool) we can report that the errant *Jet Set Willy* is alive and well, if a trifle late in emerging from that Surbiton Mine of his. Author **Matthew Smith** told us that the main reason for the delay was due to the builders who have not



Reclusive programmer Matthew Smith makes a rare appearance for the CRASH camera between manically mining.

finished work on decoration of Willy's enormous new mansion. The size of the house is a rather daunting, as it contains 64 rooms, and is therefore some three times bigger than the mines below! Each room is in an indescribable mess because when Willy's new found fair-weather friends have a party, do they have a party!

Alan Maton of **Software Projects** had hoped the game would be released before Christmas and planned accordingly. But the sheer size of the game, the amount of animation in it, and the fact that it is intended to be a big improvement on *Manic Miner* has caused Matthew the kind of headaches that Willy himself would appreciate. Another week should see the program work finished, we were told. The inserts are already printed and waiting — so, come on Matthew, get off your Eugene's Lair and back to the surface!

FALUVIAN REPORT

Quicksilva have just launched a club members only magazine called *The Game Lords Megazine*. It's eight pages of game hints, news on the company's products, a chart and competitions. There's also a report on the Faluvian Empire, which someone at Quicksilva had threatened to write a novel about. I hope this isn't a cheapskate way out of writing the real thing — don't they know how many Spectrum owners are saving up to buy the *Chronicles of the Faluvian Empire* when the trilogy of novels are released? Whether you're an Xxkraan Raider or a mere earth-bound alien-zapper, details on the club are available from Quicksilva, **The Games Lords Club, 13 Palmerston Road, Southampton**.



ROLAND MOVES HIS WARREN

Software house **Rabbit** have recently moved from their premises in Harrow to a new home in Wealdstone — in fact it's called 'The Warren' and is a suitable name as Roland Rabbit appears to be breeding games faster than a hamster fed on oysters. At the same time 18 year old **Terry Grant** has been promoted to the post of Software Director. Terry has worked at Rabbit for some time, and has been responsible for the production of 15 games now. Rabbit consider the concept of a software director to be a new one, and they feel there is a need for such a job. Terry, who studied computer science before joining Rabbit, feels that a detached view of a game will often produce more realistic results and that it's very easy for a programmer to get too far inside the game. His role is to ensure that Rabbit games have consistently high levels of playability and will maintain the interest of players for longer periods.



Terry Grant — Rabbit's software director.

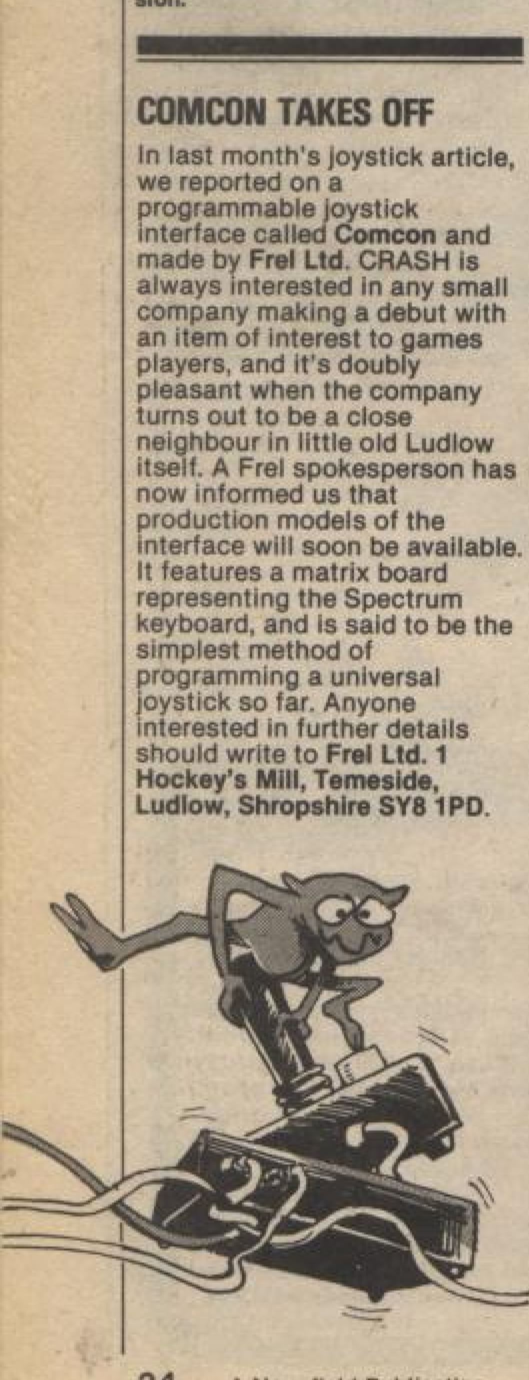
News Update



The CRASH roving camera 'bumps' into Ocean programmers Urquhart and Pierpoint on the train from Liverpool to Manchester — interested in our review of their game Transversion.

COMCON TAKES OFF

In last month's joystick article, we reported on a programmable joystick interface called **Comcon** and made by **Frel Ltd.** CRASH is always interested in any small company making a debut with an item of interest to games players, and it's doubly pleasant when the company turns out to be a close neighbour in little old Ludlow itself. A Frel spokesperson has now informed us that production models of the interface will soon be available. It features a matrix board representing the Spectrum keyboard, and is said to be the simplest method of programming a universal joystick so far. Anyone interested in further details should write to **Frel Ltd. 1 Hockey's Mill, Temeside, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1PD.**



IMAGINE-ATION



Arcadians Mark Butler & David Lawson.

Known colloquially as the 'Glass Tower' in micro-software conscious Liverpool, **Imagine's** new headquarters office in Sir. Thomas Street is actually a beautifully renovated four-storey building of red brick. Appropriately enough, it is situated only a short distance from the site of where . Liverpool's famous **Cavern Club** used to be. Appropriate because there are some uncanny parallels between Imagine-ation and Beatlemania.

When Brian Epstein discovered the Beatles playing in the Cavern they were unknowns. Epstein was an accountant running a record business. Imagine's Director of Operations is **Bruce Everiss**. In the late 70s Bruce Everiss started up a unique shop called **Micro Digital**, one of the first shops in the UK to sell home computers over the counter to an unsuspecting populace. The shop was a great success, so much so that Mr. Everiss attracted the attention of the high street giants, and eventually the business was sold to Laskys. Like Brian Eps tein's record shop in the early 60s, Micro Digital was a hot bed of young talent — in this case not musicians but software enthusiasts. Among the employees were names later to emerge like **David Lawson** and **Mark Butler**. After Micro Digital went to Laskys the various enthusiasts merged their energies into what became **Bug-Byte**, but with so many young, go-ahead talents involved it was not surprising that they should want to go their separate ways. Lawson and Butler founded Imagine and released Lawson's program *Arcadia*.

The infant company was a phenomenal success and within months had earned its first six million pounds selling Spectrum games. With growth had to come planning so Lawson and Butler did the obvious and asked Bruce Everiss to come and run the company.

Today, just a year after it started Imagine is a company with over 100 employees, a head office block, two warehouses and a Contract Programming Building. The founders are worth an estimated £30 million and the management live and work in a fine style.

Bruce Everiss showed us around the main office block. The company's affairs are run from here and it also includes the sales team and games programming department. An area for six programmers is set out on a lavish scale, backed up by a computing power which is quite staggering, and a Technical Support Area which can provide the programmers with whatever resources they require. As we walked about **Ian Weatherburn**, authot of Imagine's latest game *Alchemist*, was already at work at one of the desks on another project. A lot of the other programmers have been

continued on page 92



Ian Weatherburn (Alchemist) back at work.

CRASH Editor, **Roger Kean**. Imagine's Director of Operations, **Bruce Everiss**, and PA, **Jenny**





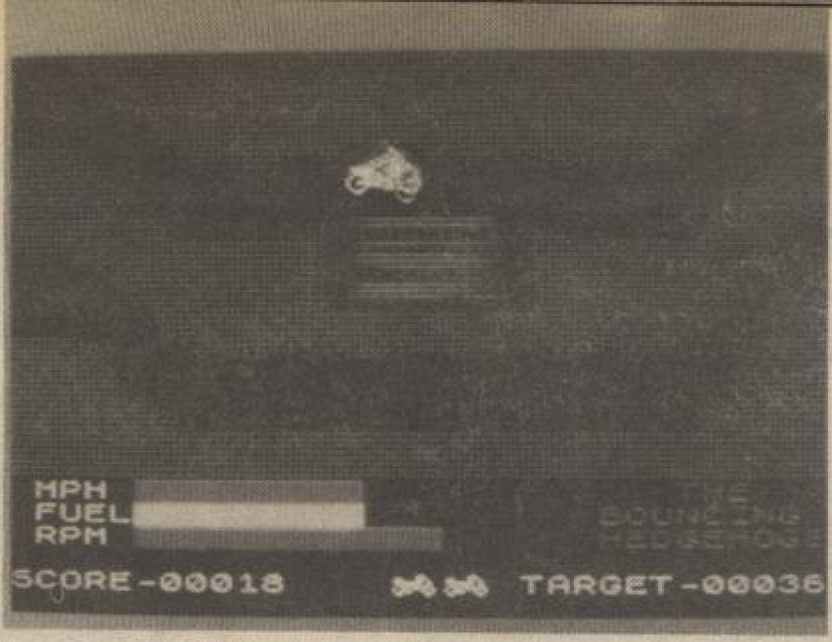
WHEELIE

Producer: **Microsphere**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**

Microsphere seem to have done it again, following up their excellent *Train Game* with another wholly original, beautifully put together game in *Wheelie*. You have just taken delivery of the ultimate two-wheeled machine — the four cylinder fuel-injected turbo-charged Zedexaki 500. While you're out on the road trying it out, you see this sign saying 'Private road — no speed limit to brave riders'. All excited, you enter the driveway, the gates slam shut behind you, and you are trapped in Nightmare Park. Your only way out now is to find the ghostrider, who's dozing somewhere off to the right, wake him up and then race him back. The park is full of wildlife, all trained in karate, so bumping into any is not so good for the health.

The screen display takes the form of four 'roads' stacked one on another, almost like a cross section through caves. There are not always four visible, and any road travelled may well go steeply up or downhill to another level. There are thin 'up/downhill' lines across some, and the bike will travel down a level if the down key is pressed, and the same for uphill.

Apart from the vicious wildlife (includes leaping kangaroos and giant hedgehogs getting their own back for truckers) there are other problems to be encountered. Humps in the road can only be got over by accelerating rapidly at the last second and doing a 'wheelie' — front wheel riding up and over. Sometimes you have to jump over a bus! There's also ice on some roads, which must be taken with caution. Running into a dead end will kill you off if you don't brake in time, and going downhill too fast can also be rather fatal! Gas stations are few and far between, so it's worth backtracking for them. To be promoted to a new level requires completing the one you're on, when you'll be given a code to let you enter the next one up. Good riding!



Become Eddie Kidd for the day — Microsphere's wonderful Wheelie.

CRITICISM

'When I first saw another reviewer playing 'Wheelie', I thought that it was totally different and looked good. Then I got round to reviewing it and my impression that it was a sort of 'Scramble' game faded! It's much, much more! Revs are important when jumping cars and buses — too fast and the bike cartwheels, flinging the rider off, too slow and you won't make it. Once you get to the end of the complex you meet the ghost rider, a tune is played, and the race back begins. You must beat him, but he has a distinct advantage — he can travel in a straight line across the screen, but only at about a third of your top speed. All that I can say is that I spent about three hours playing before I remembered I was supposed to write something about it! A dangerously addictive game. Great, Brill, Fantastic — super words fail. Just buy it!'

'The makers boast that Wheelie *has some of the best graphics you're ever likely to see on a Spectrum. I'd like to think that there's still room for improvement as time goes by, but certainly these are exceptionally good. Smooth, very detailed, with loads of animation. The spills the biker takes are all quite varied, depending on the type of mischance he hits. It's all quite realistic. At first you might assume that you can memorise the layout of the caverns, but I'm afraid not, each game they change. All in all, this is one of the most enjoyable games I have played for a long while, and I'm sure it's going to keep players entertained for hours.'*

'If you're playing with the keyboard, it has a very sensible layout, but there's a menu for selecting Kempston or cursor type joystick as well as a routine for setting up other joysticks via user-defined keys. Very good. As for the game, well it is pretty good. Lovely graphics, very, very difficult and challenging. Excellent value.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: left = bottom row left, right = bottom row right (these act as accelerate and brake), second row = down, third row = up and top row = freeze
Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek and user-definable keys
Keyboard play: very responsive
Colour: good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: good (excellent on bike effects)
Skill levels: several
Lives: 4
Screens: new regenerated, and scrolling
General rating: addictive, generally excellent, good value.

Use of computer	89%
Graphics	86%
Playability	90%
Getting started	95%
Addictive qualities	99%
Value for money	99%
Overall	93%

The Pyramid

Producer: **Fantasy**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Bob Hamilton**

In essence *The Pyramid* is a simple game, as all good games should be. Your hero is Ziggy, who sits in a little bubble capsule equipped with a 'highly effective phased plasmic laser' with which he can atomise any of the 60 weird aliens that live inside the Pyramid. This structure consists of 120 chambers on 15 levels, 1 chamber on the top level, 2 on the second, three on the third — and so on. The object of the game is to reach the exit on level 15 in as short a time as possible.

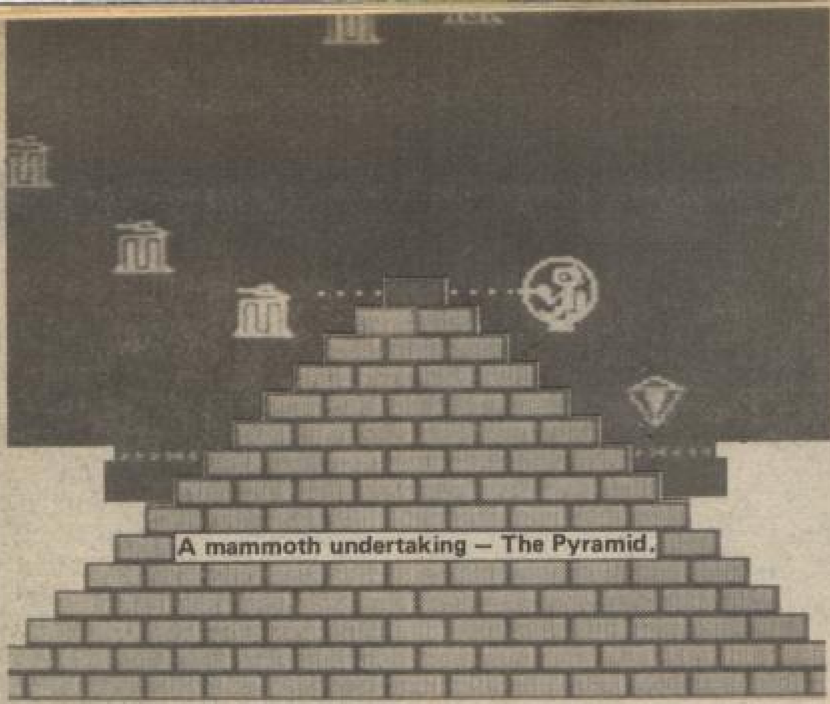
Each time the capsule touches an alien its shield power is depleted. When the shield has evaporated, Ziggy is vulnerable and will die if he runs into an alien. There are two exits from each chamber, protected by a force field. These are neutralised by crystals which drop from the top of the chamber after a certain number of aliens have been atomised. The crystals have three states — white, they destroy anything touched and deplete the capsule shield — yellow, they become vulnerable to destruction by aliens but are still too hot to pick up — and when blue they can be collected and used to neutralise the exit force field, although if the capsule is hit by an alien a crystal will still be destroyed. With each level the force fields require an extra crystal to neutralise them, so on level 3 it takes 3 crystals, level 4 needs 4 crystals — and so on.

And basically, that's it. Scoring is done by giving you 9999 points when you enter a chamber and awarding what's left when you exit. Points over 30,000 are coded and may be sent to Fantasy for publishing in their top 1000 scores every 6 months.

CRITICISM

'At first I thought this was going to be an adventure, but no, it's a very unique arcade game and well worth buying with 120 screens, each one more difficult than the last. It will take a long time to master. Another bonus is the graphics which are very good — like **Ultimate's** style, smooth, action-packed and detailed. Good keyboard positions too. A Very addictive game.'

'This game is nicely packaged and presented with excellent instructions. In playing it's enjoyable because all the colours are used, the graphics are smooth and very detailed, each character having its own movement and animation — there's even a recoil effect on the laser. The game is great fun to play,



A mammoth undertaking — The Pyramid.

frustrating when you start to get down a few levels, die, and have to go back to the start. Very challenging. I liked it!'

'Presentation and graphics are excellent and the range of control key positions and joysticks that may be used all add up to very good value for money. A highly addictive game.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 3 options — Q/A up/down, O/P left/right, bottom row fire; or — top row up, 2nd row down, A-G left, H-L right, bottom row fire; or — Z/SYMBOL SHIFT left/right, X/M up/down, C N fire.
Joystick: Fuller, AGF, Protek, Kempston, Mikrogen
Keyboard play: very resposive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: good
Lives: 1
Screens: 120
General rating: addictive, playable and excellent value for money.

Use of computer	**85%**
Graphics	**82%**
Playability	**81%**
Getting started	**78%**
Addictive qualities	**83%**
Value for money	**91%**
Overall	**83%**

Doomsday Castle

Producer: **Fantasy**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Bob Hamilton**

Doomsday Castle is the sequel to *The Pyramid*. Often follow-ups lack the flair of the original, but in this case the same excellent graphics have been used and added to. The scenario has also been enormously expanded, and the cassette is accompanied by a long, highly amusing and informative inlay of instructions which clearly explain the various roles of the 5 different alien creatures you will encounter, the layout of the castle halls and passageways.

It's a long scenario, but in brief, it seems that the Elves, ever hopeless at keeping their magic rings and crystals, have allowed the infinitely evil Scarthax to house 6 large elfin stones in Doomsday Castle, where their dangerous power can be harnessed for his own nasty ends. Super hero *Ziggy* has been sent in to find the stones and escape with them. Some hope! Each chamber is filled with Urks, Garthrogs, a Googly Bird, Nucleoids and Orphacs. Ziggy, in his by now familiar defence capsule, has to laser Urks to death to keep up his laser power, which he needs to blast away one of the four red exit doors. Most of the time these doors are protected by the Garthrogs, who sail up and down on lifts, shooting blindly at anything. Only when a Garthrog is 'up' can Ziggy get in a shot at a door. When the door is sufficiently destroyed, Ziggy will be sucked through. Each chamber has an anteroom which may contain a crystal or one of the 6 ancient stones. Only these 6 give you scoring points, which are being eaten away the longer you remain in the castle. High scores are coded and may be sent to Fantasy for publishing in their list of top 1000 scores every 6 months.

CRITICISM

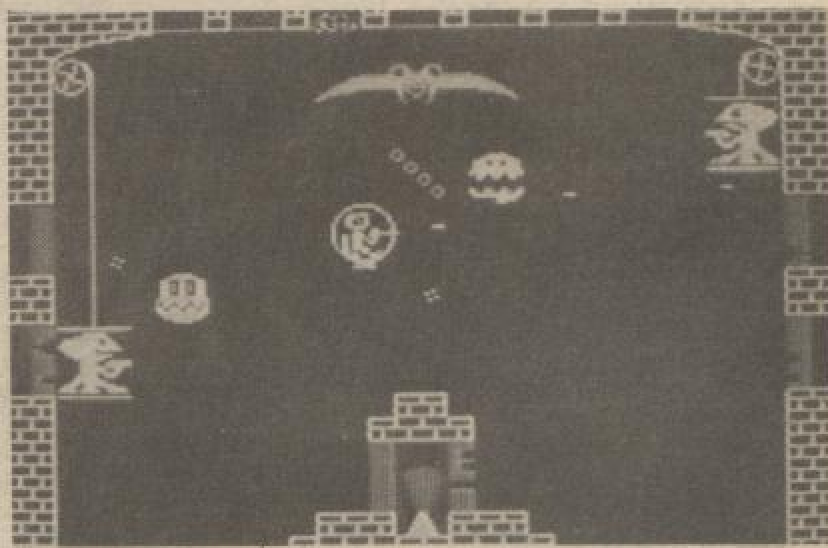
'What makes this game fun to play, is the complex relationship between all the creatures. Googly Birds only want to sleep, for instance, but Urks keep trying to wake them up and make them fly about, so it becomes as important to shoot Urks to prevent this happening as it does to shoot them for laser replenishment. Added to that, there are numerous routes through the castle but not all are as useful as others, so there is an adventure and strategy element thrown in. Mind you, coping with the furiously fast arcade element is quite enough for me!'

All I can say is BUY IT!'

'Fantasy certainly seem determined to drive people nuts with immensely long games at impossible odds. Not that this is unplayable, quite the opposite, it's great fun, with good graphics and good sound. To offer any real criticism one would have to play for months! Excellent value.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 3 options — see review for *The Pyramid*
Joystick: Fuller, Kempston, AGF, Protek, Mikrogen
Keyboard play: very responsive — Ziggy floats downwards under his own steam, so you have to work hard at this one.
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: excellent



Beset by alien enemies, Super Hero Ziggy battles against overwhelming odds.

'The graphics are excellent, smooth, detailed, animated and amusing. Not only must you survive in a hall, shoot out the door, get the crystal and move on, but you get shut in a passage with a time-locked door, where you must survive for as long as possible against the Orphacs before being released into another hall to do battle again. A great follow up to The Pyramid, *and another challenge to* **Ultimate's** *great game name.*

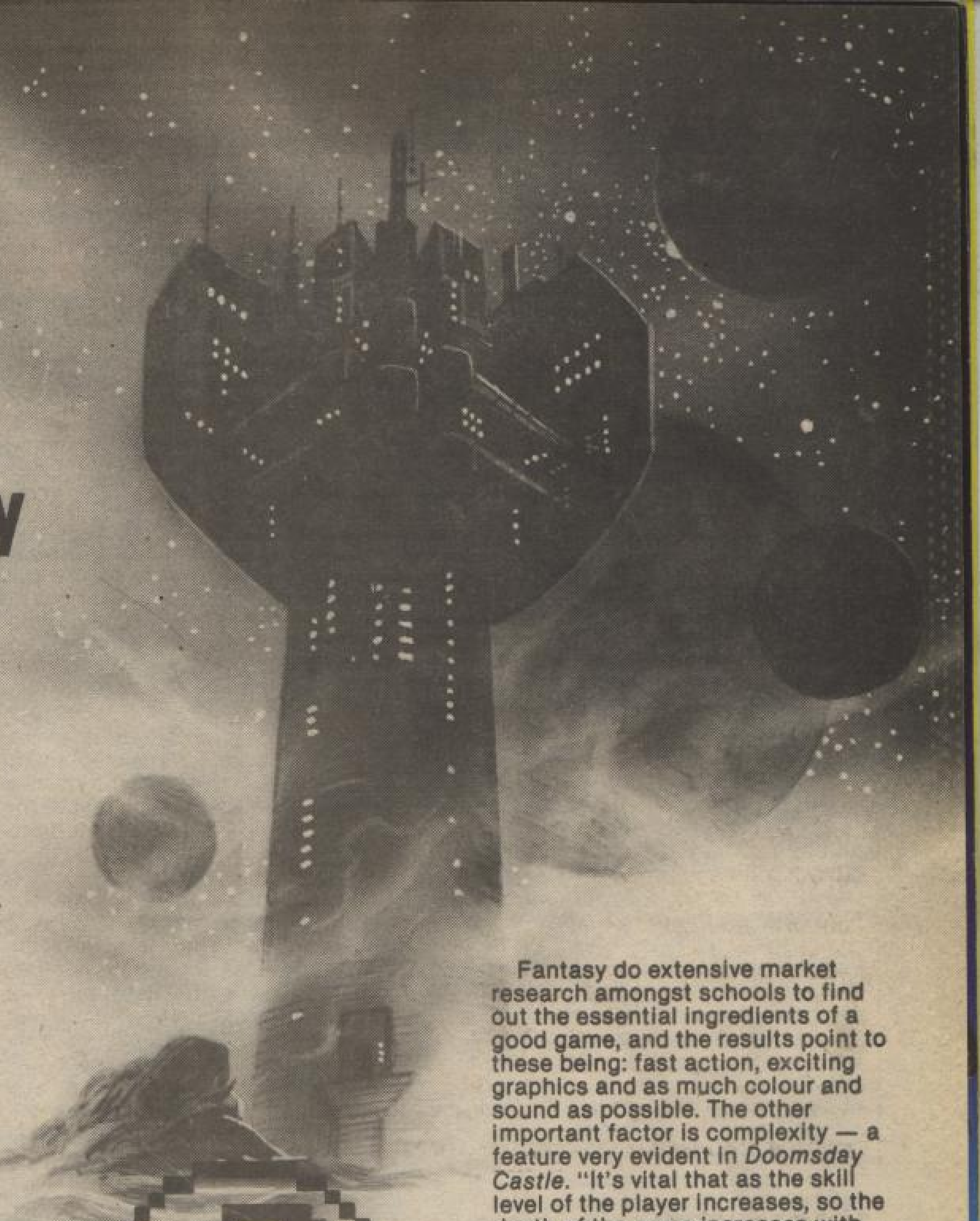
Sound: good
Lives: 1
Screens: 25 halls, 49 passages
General rating: addictive, playable, very good value.

Use of computer	**85%**
Graphics	**90%**
Playability	**88%**
Getting started	**78%**
Addictive qualities	**86%**
Value for money	**92%**
Overall	**87%**



CRASH

fantasy SOFTWARE



100 Doomsday Castles to be Won!

Don't miss out on this exciting competition, which offers you the chance to drive yourself mad with one of the best arcade games around . . .

If you enjoy a hard and fast action game that also has masses of levels to play through, then Fantasy's *The Pyramid* and *Doomsday Castle* are probably for you! Now's your chance to win a copy of the latest release, *Doomsday Castle* — a highly rated mind-blower. In association with CRASH, Fantasy are offering 100 copies of *Doomsday Castle* to the first 100 correct entries to the questions below. Easy? Well, perhaps, but playing *Doomsday Castle* is no easy task!

Fantasy was formed early in 1983 by **Bob Hamilton** and **Paul Dyer**. Bob, it seems, gets his games ideas when running over the Welsh hills, which might explain why he thinks games players should have to work hard too! They are both software professionals from the defence industry with experience in real-time assembly language programming, and a real-time fascination with sci-fi. This puts them in a strong position to write games software.

The company's original name wasn't Fantasy to begin with, and before it was changed, they brought out two very popular games with a 'space' theme. But Bob and Paul were keen to develop a 'space' theme game which was new. "It's almost impossible to come up with a completely new concept," says Paul, "but we think with *The Pyramid* and *Doomsday Castle* we have come up with two games which are very different from all the rest."

CRASH/FANTASY COMPETITION

1 What was the company's original name before they changed it to Fantasy?
2 In last month's issue of CRASH, what was the name of the dying space ship in THE TERMINAL MAN comic?
3 Name the super-hero of The Pyramid and Doomsday Castle.
4 How many chambers are there in The Pyramid?
5 Name the two 'space' theme games previously released by Fantasy (which were also under the original company name).
6 Name any two monsters you might encounter in Doomsday Castle.
7 Name the artist who painted the CRASH cover illustration for the last issue and this issue.
8 Count up the program entries in this month's Spectrum Guide Section (excluding the Game of the Month on page 45), divide the result by 3 and give us the answer.

Fantasy do extensive market research amongst schools to find out the essential ingredients of a good game, and the results point to these being: fast action, exciting graphics and as much colour and sound as possible. The other important factor is complexity — a feature very evident in *Doomsday Castle*. "It's vital that as the skill level of the player increases, so the depth of the game increases with them," says Paul.

Difficult high — score games naturally lead to a sense of competition amongst players, which Fantasy are keen to promote on a nationwide basis. This adds an extra dimension when any player can compare his score against the very best scores nationally. To achieve this the games have embedded in them a score validifier, so that a 12 letter code will appear whenever a new high score is achieved. Fantasy publishes the top 1000 best scores every 6 months in their Fantasy Micro Club newsletter. Top scores will also appear in alternate issues of CRASH.

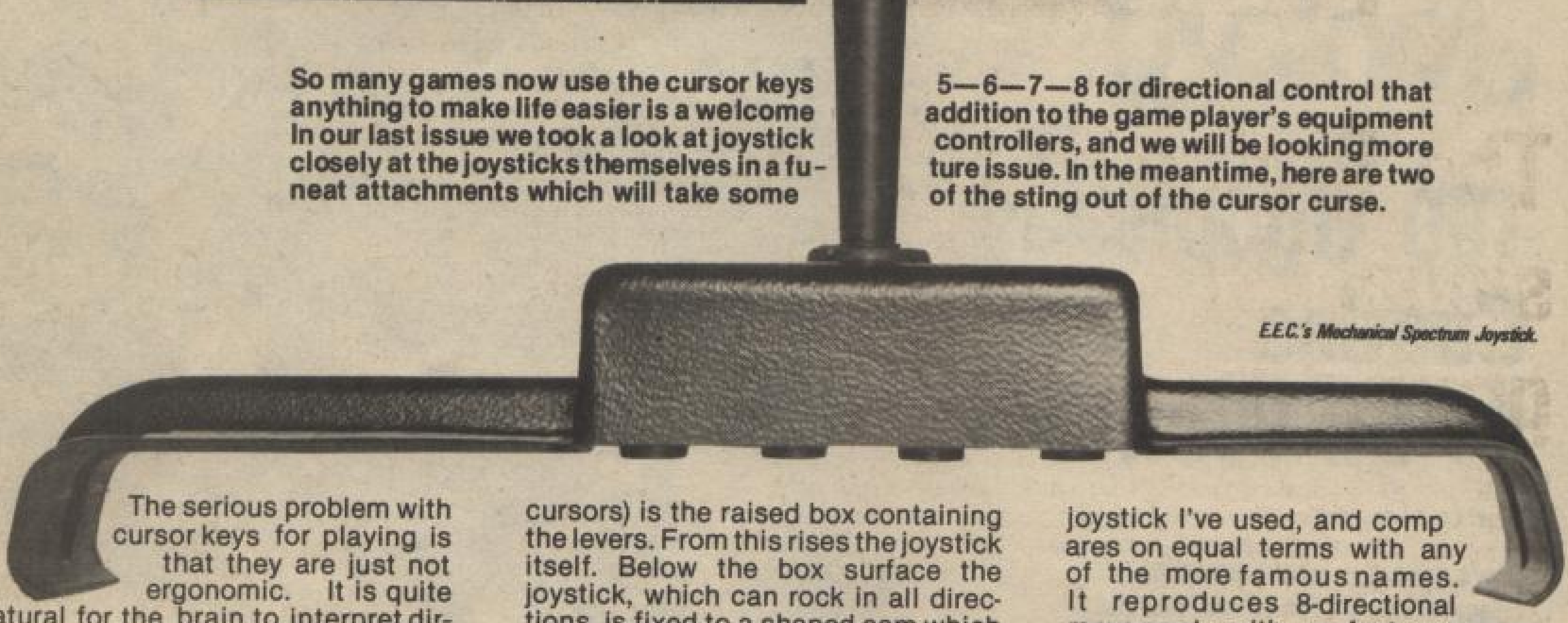
Now all you have to do is get these ludicrously simple questions right, whip them into us as fast as possible and you, too, could join the throng of people driven to utter distraction by the awsome problems of surviving the action-packed *Doomsday Castle!*

Name, address and answers in a letter or on a postcard please, to
CRASH/FANTASY COMPETITION, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1 DB

The first 100 correct entries drawn out of the bag will each receive a copy of Doomsday Castle. Competition closing date is last post on 16th. March 1984.

CURSE THE CURSORS





So many games now use the cursor keys 5—6—7—8 for directional control that anything to make life easier is a welcome addition to the game player's equipment. In our last issue we took a look at joystick controllers, and we will be looking more closely at the joysticks themselves in a future issue. In the meantime, here are two neat attachments which will take some of the sting out of the cursor curse.

E.E.C.'s Mechanical Spectrum Joystick.

The serious problem with cursor keys for playing is that they are just not ergonomic. It is quite natural for the brain to interpret direction quite physically — in other words, for up and down control to be in that configuration, and left and right similarly.
This is why key positions like **Q/A** and **N/M** are sensible. **Q/A** and **Z/X** are not so good because the two sets of keys, one for each hand, are too close. Directional keys that come in a straight line are poor in comparison because in the heat of play, the brain can become confused as to which set is which. Now if, on top of that, you add the factor of the peculiar layout of Spectrum cursor keys, which is left-down — up-right, you can see that you have what might be called split hand control.

A fairly new idea has been to develop joysticks which simply clip over the top of the Spectrum keyboard and mechanically depress the cursor keys. The movement is transmitted by means of levers activated by a joystick. This means the joystick can be moved left to create left movement, right for right movement, and so on, just as you would if you used a programmed joystick.

The obvious advantage to this system is its cost. There are no electronics involved, no wires, no edge connectors and no hardware programming. The obvious disadvantage is that the joystick will only control the cursor keys, and by no means all games on the market opt for them. Nevertheless, a great many games do, or have user definable keys, or make provision increasingly for cursor type joysticks. Obviously if a game does offer user-definable keys, then its no problem at all to set up for a clip-over joystick.

E.E.C. Ltd. have brought out such a clip-on cursor joystick called **Spectrum Mechanical Joystick**. This comes as a one-piece clip-over unit which press fits over the shoulder of the Spectrum. Slightly off-centre (to take into account the position of the cursors) is the raised box containing the levers. From this rises the joystick itself. Below the box surface the joystick, which can rock in all directions, is fixed to a shaped cam which in turn activates the four levers.

A disadvantage of this system is that the pressure on the key pads is uneven, so that in play it requires different pressures for different directions, and the transmission of pressure seems quite uneven when it is used for 8-directional control. Overall the construction is strong — almost too strong, which means you have to hold the unit in place when playing fast and furious games. Its main advantage is that it clips on quite quickly and without any fuss.

Another contender for the clip-on cursor joystick is the Spectrum-Stick from **Grant Design Ltd**. This one comes in three pieces, and so packs into an amazingly small box for posting. The central unit is a closed box a mere three inches by one and three-quarters and an inch high. Two Z-shaped arms are attached to this by means of white plastic bolts. The advantage of this system is that the bolts can be well tightened onto the shoulder of the Spectrum, and when in place the unit has no tendency to slide or wobble in play. A useful touch is that the hidden cursor key symbols are all reproduced on top of the unit so that you can still use them.

The joystick itself is extremely positive in action — in fact so much so that I'm sure it's the best "feel" joystick I've used, and compares on equal terms with any of the more famous names. It reproduces 8-directional movement with perfect accuracy, and is so light to handle that there is no risk of computer movement or even of joystick damage through over-ardent playing!

These clip-on cursor joysticks are a worthwhile investment, I think, even if you have another type (unless of course its already a cursor interface joystick). And both makes mentioned here, do leave the rest of the keys free for use. Of course you don't get a fire button with them, but then, quite a lot of fast games use two or even three effects keys and you can't cope with that on any joystick at the moment. So, from now on, it's not only plug in and turn on but also clip on.



Grant Design's neat little Spectrum-Stick.

The Spectrum Mechanical Joystick is priced at £9.95 (incl. p + p) from E.E.C. Ltd., 1 Whitehouse Close, Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks SL9 0DA.
The Spectrum-Stick is priced at £9.95 (incl. p + p) from Grant Design Ltd. Bank House, Repham, Norwich, Norfolk NR10 4JJ.
Both joysticks should be available from good computer retail outlets.

fantasy SOFTWARE

The battle could be yours.....
.....but it won't be easy!



This is 'ZIGGY', shown above, in his exploratory capsule and is a true representation of the on-screen graphics.

THE PYRAMID

THE PYRAMID is an arcade style game which has a very adventurous feel to it.

The Pyramid contains 120 chambers on 15 levels. In order to get from one chamber to another you must fight off the indigenous aliens to collect an energised crystal which will neutralize the force field guarding the two exits.

The Pyramid is inhabited by a total of 60 weird and exotic alien types, all of which are beautifully animated. You will meet a whole variety of demons, droids, insects and monsters, with a sprinkling of the more unusual, the extra-terrestrial tweezers, galactic strawberry, cosmic claw, mutant eye, plus a whole host of entities that defy rational description. You'll no doubt invent your own nicknames.

You proceed to explore the pyramid from top to bottom with the difficulty generally increasing with the depth of level. Depending on the choice of exit from each chamber you are likely to have a different game every time you play.

Apart from the challenge of trying to achieve the highest score possible the pyramid contains a number puzzle to solve. The more chambers you successfully visit the more information is gathered to enable you to discover the secret numbers of the pyramid. The puzzle won't take you days to solve, it will probably take you a few months.

DOOMSDAY CASTLE

DOOMSDAY CASTLE consists of a labyrinth of 74 complexly interconnected Halls and Passages where you will meet a whole host of adversaries serving the infinitely evil Scarthax, the Garthrogs, the Orphacs, the phenomenally nasty Googly Bird and the Urks which manifest themselves in over fifty unbelievably weird and wonderful guises.

Scarthax has scoured the Universe to bring together the six ancient stones of lifeforce. United in Doomsday Castle they are being used to wield an irresistable power over the cosmos, emanating waves of corruption through every galaxy.

To save the Universe, you must battle your way through the Castle to find and collect the six stones and use their force against Scarthax to destroy Doomsday Castle, hopefully escaping yourself before the final cataclysmic explosion.

The task is not easy (saving the Universe never is!) and it will take you many games to unfold the structure of Doomsday Castle and discover the locations of the ancient stones.

The addictive arcade style action will keep you coming back to play but the overall challenge should still keep you occupied for months.

FANTASY SOFTWARE is available from W.H.SMITHS, JOHN MENZIES, BOOTS, LASKYS, GREENS, RUMBELOWS, SPECTRUM GROUP, COMPUTERS FOR ALL and all other good software retailers.

The Pyramid at £5.50 and Doomsday Castle at £6.50 from

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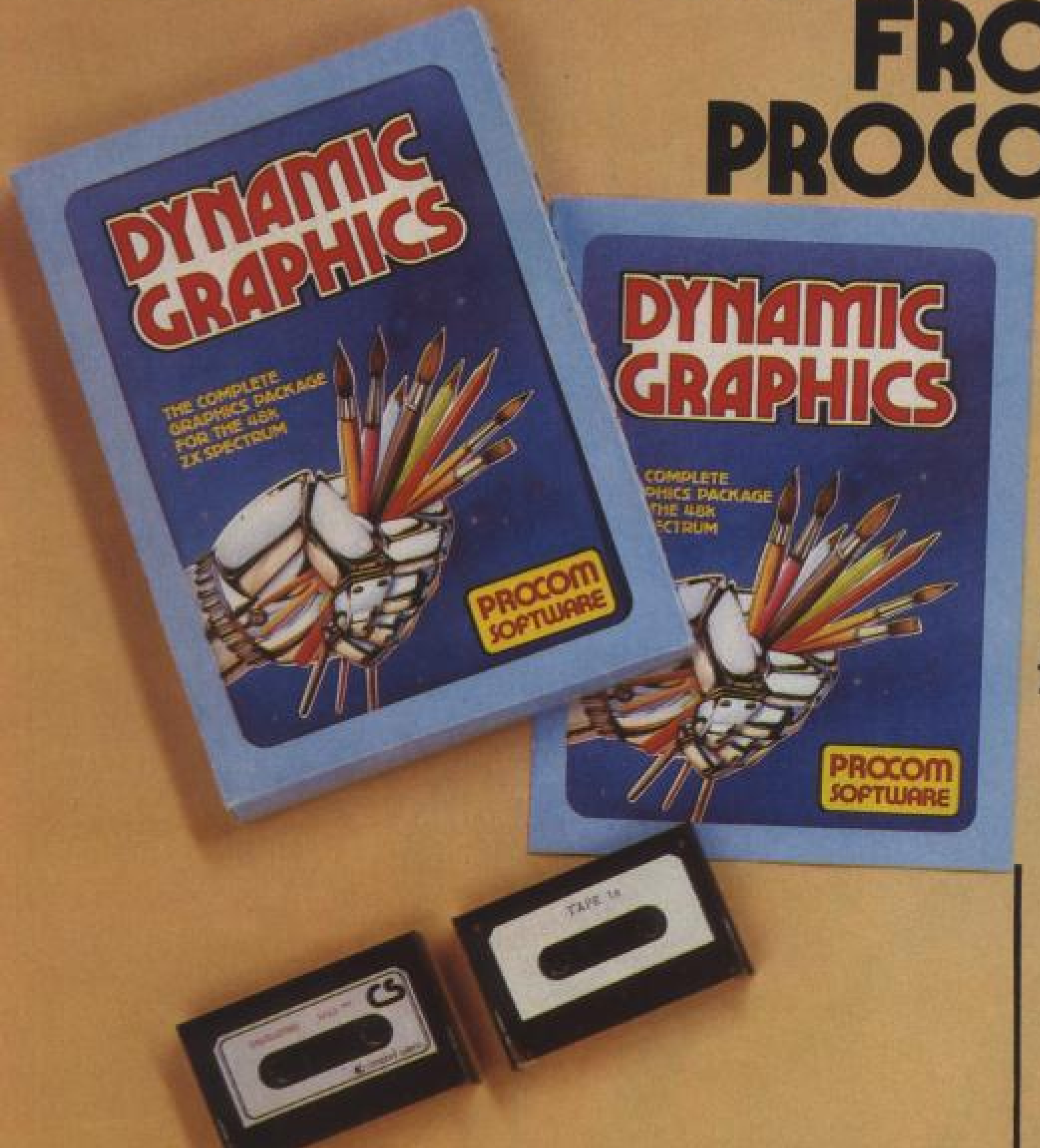
"The Wrath of Magra" comes as three, 48K programmes on cassette, boxed with instruction manual and book detailing the history of the Third Continent and the many spells you will be using throughout the game. For the 48K Spectrum @ £12.50.

NOTE: "The Wrath of Magra" is a complete adventure. You need not buy "Volcanic Dungeon" or "Black Crystal" to play it.

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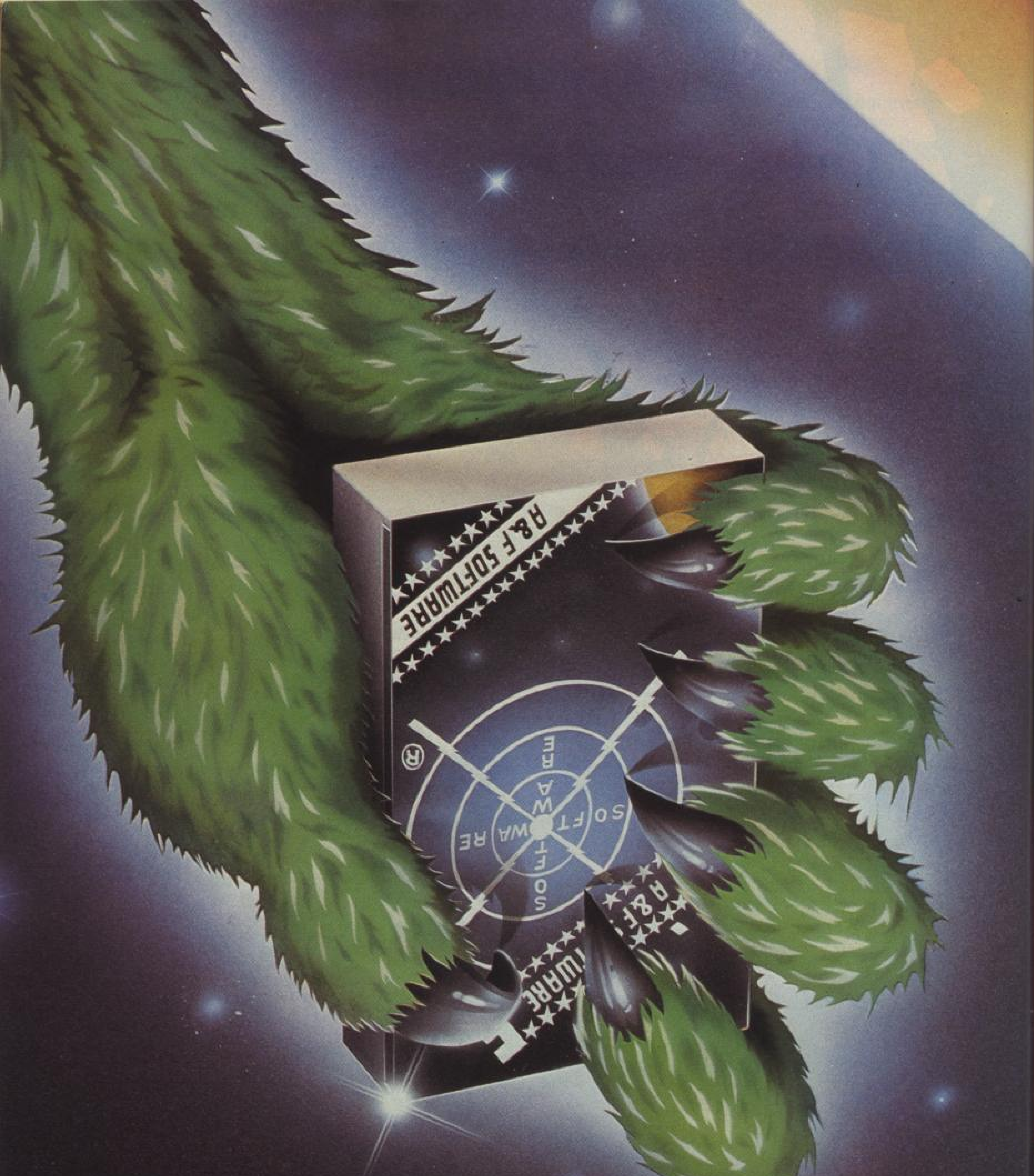
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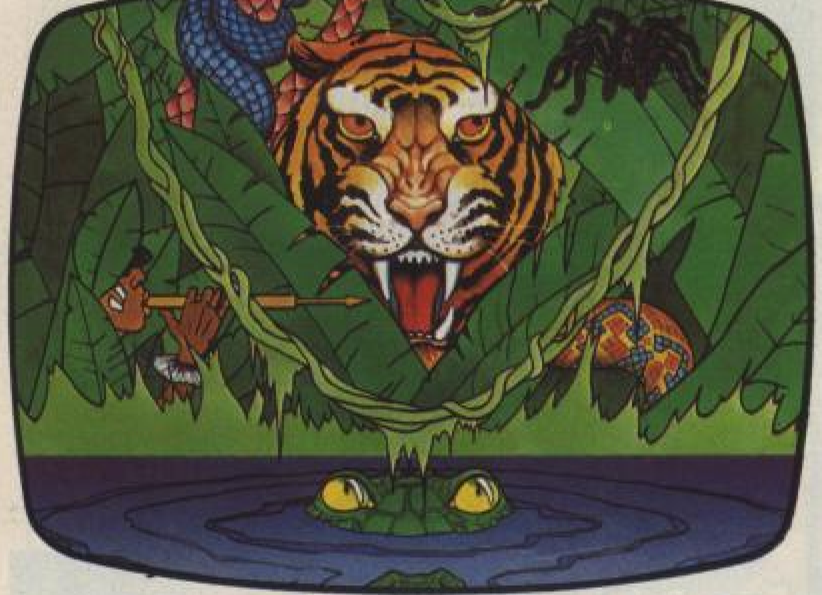
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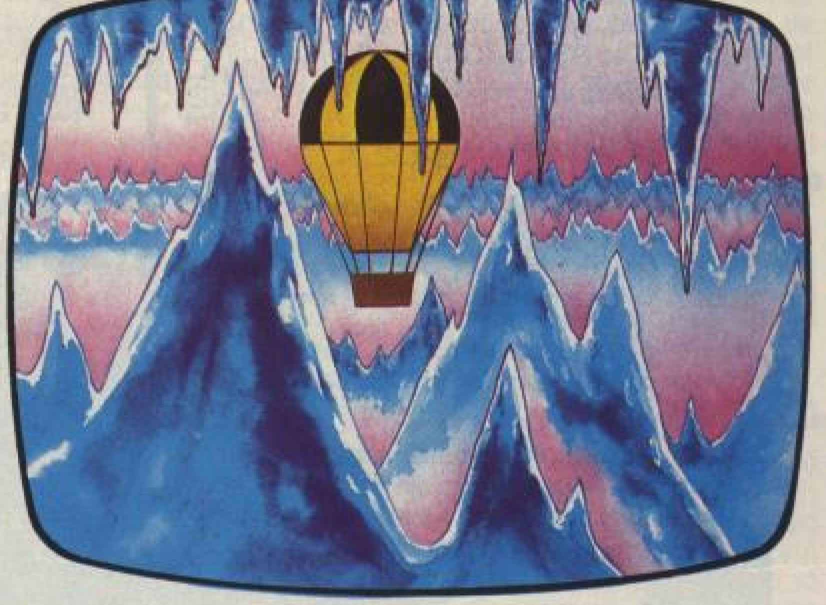

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Atic Atac

Producer: **Ultimate**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**

In last month's issue we promised a fuller review of *Atic Atac* as our review copies arrived too late to do it full justice. It turns out to be difficult to do full justice to this program anyway! There's such a lot of it. You're stuck in this castle which contains five floors with lots of rooms on each floor. The total number of rooms, staircases and passageways is a subject of argument, although the best estimate we've heard about from one reviewer (who's been busy mapping the place) is 40 rooms per floor, making a total of 200.

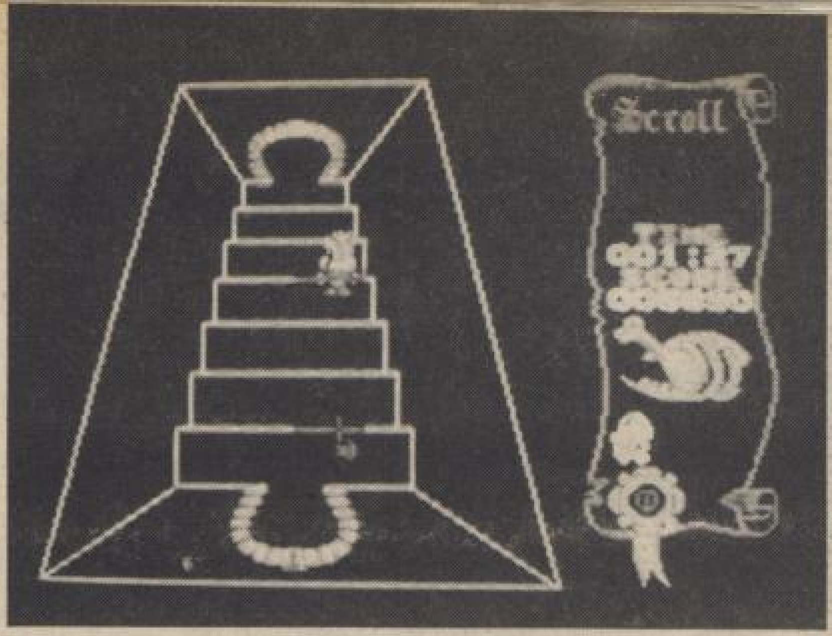
The rooms are seen in a sort of splayed perspective from above so that all four walls as well as the floor are visible. Put simply, the object of the game is to find the key, which comes in three pieces, open the main door and escape. You can do this as three different characters — knight, wizard or serf, each having different weapons and knowing different secret passages.

Very like *Lunar Jetman*, Ultimate have provided little or no instruction as to how the game is played to your best advantage — the entire thing is a learning experience, like life!

CRITICISM

'There's really nothing much to be said about Ultimate's graphics that hasn't already been said. Just marvellous. But the details of events is also fantastic, like when you lose a life, a cross marks the spot, but it stays there until the end of the game. From this you learn that if you pick up an object, and then put it down somewhere you'll be able to recognise which was the room from rediscovering that object. This becomes the best way to map out the rooms. If you aren't nuts already. *Atic Atac* is likely to be the turning point.'

'Atic Atac is in no way a true adventure, but neither is it a shoot the baddies game.



Tic Tac, who's there?

But it is one thing — FANTASTIC! There are many types of baddies, ghosts, spiders, ghouls, pumpkins and guest appearances from Frankenstein's monster, Dracula, Devil Witch and Mummy. You certainly get you money's worth from content alone! It's fast moving, fun to play and its originality, graphics and addictiveness make it excellent value for money. This is one of the best arcade games I have seen in a long time.

'A drawback with complex games is that the control keys can get difficult to manage. *Atic Atac* uses Ultimate's favourite layout, but the keys are a handful and it's not possible to get full value from the game's potential if you use a joystick. Definitely a game for those with nimble fingers! Otherwise — just excellent. Ultimate have done it again.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q = left, W = right, E = down, R = up, T = fire, Z or SYMBOL SHIFT = pick up and drop
Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek
Keyboard play: highly responsive, 8-directional but needs practice!
Colour: very good
Graphics: excellent with masses of detail
Sound: good
Skill levels: just generally impossible!
Lives: 3
General rating: excellent

Use of computer	90%
Graphics	95%
Playability	95%
Getting started	85%
Addictive qualities	93%
Value for money	95%
Overall	**92%**

Earth Defence

Producer: **Artic**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£4.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Donald Campbell**

'Missile Command' games for the Spectrum must rapidly be coming up for a comparison article — almost every major software house has now had a go at a version, one of the most recent being **Artic**. In *Earth Defence* you are given the usual 6 cities to defend with your three missile bases. In this version only the middle one actually fires, the other two supplying missiles. It also features a moving cross hair sight like other versions, but when the fire key is pressed a cross is left until the missile arrives, leaving your main sight free to dash off to the next incoming enemy missile trail. Since the game is well known there's little point in describing it further.

CRITICISM

'The graphics are fairly simple with nice explosions, but with only one of the three bases firing it's difficult to cope, especially with the poor control key layout provided. The original used a tracker ball for controlling missiles, and unless you have a compatible joystick, I would not personally recommend this game.'

'I thought the use of colour was good, the graphics are smooth and the sound is also good. A very addictive game.'

'It has simpler looking graphics than some of the other versions, but the explosions are about the best I've seen. All three levels are fast, the highest being virtually impossible without a great deal of practice. Pity about the silly control keys though — it's not an arrangement for what is a very difficult game to play.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: poor, 6/7 left/right, 8/9 up/down, zero to fire. These are keys for the Sinclair interface 2, and an alternative should have been provided
Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive but difficult to control well
Colour: average to good, changes with screens
Graphics: simple with good explosion effects
Sound: reasonable
Skill levels: 3
Lives: 6 cities
General rating: above average to good.

Use of computer	62%
Graphics	64%
Playability	60%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	62%
Value for money	64%
Overall	**63%**

All seems lost as Earth's defences crumble.

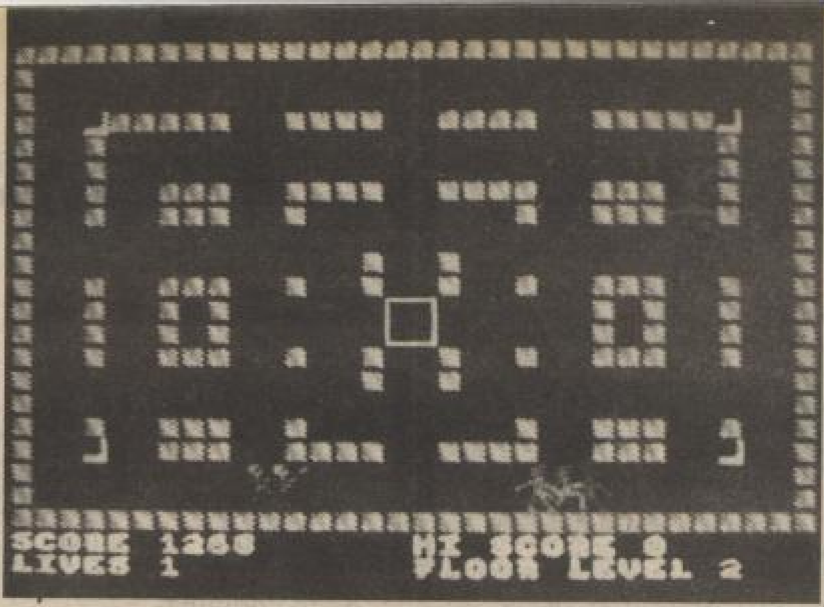


The House of the Living Dead

Producer: **Phipps Associates**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**

With another title sounding like an adventure game, Phipps offer *The House of the Living Dead*. This is a simple maze arcade game, a post-Pac Man variant. It seems your travel agent has booked you into a rather odd kind of hostelry, where you wake up in the night with a bat flitting above your head. This noisome happening alerts you to the fact that your other room mates are all ghouls and monsters and creeping severed hands. Not a pleasant sight!

Fortunately, having seen many cheap Dracula movies, you are aware that if only you can collect the four pieces of the cross from the room's corners and bring them all to the centre, the life force which will emanate from it will kill the nasties off and let you progress to the next level where there will be even more horrors awaiting you. Serves you right for opting to take a cheap holiday package.



Wet, clammy bat wings – House of the Living Dead.

CRITICISM

'It's an extremely simple game to play, just move your man around the uncomplicated maze and collect the four L-shaped bits of a cross. In the centre is a red square. If you are carrying a piece of the cross when you touch it, the piece is automatically located and you can go after the next piece. There are four different types of monster, starting off with one on screen one, two on screen two and so on. With each level you just get more monsters to cope with. On that basis it does get to be quite difficult.'

'This is quite a good game, with reasonable graphics and it is fun to play, but not very addictive. An original version of what is now an unoriginal game. For what it's worth, your little man resembles Morph off the TV — at least my cousin thinks so.'

'The animation of your man is good, but there's not much to the game really. It works on the attrition principle of just wearing you down by numbers. A better arrangement of keys would have helped too, the cursors never function well with fingers. Quite good sound; I would think a good, tough game for younger age groups in preparation for alien-zapping.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: average
Colour: reasonable
Graphics: good
Sound: average
Skill levels: gets harder
Lives: 4
General rating: average with more appeal to younger players.

Use of computer	**56%**
Graphics	**66%**
Playability	**70%**
Getting started	**60%**
Addictive qualities	**47%**
Value for money	**54%**
Overall	**59%**

The Birds

Producer: **Rabbit**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.99**
Language: **Machine code**

The Birds is a simple and straightforward shoot em up more in the tradition of 'Galaxians' than 'Phoenix'. Your laser base can move left and right while three types of bird hover, flap and sweep down on you. Points scored relate to the bird hit. Each of them drops bombs, and you can score points for hitting those. Additionally, a duck flies across the top of the screen from time to time, and you get most points for hitting that. Most of the birds have a habit of turning into a falling bomb when hit, which makes it necessary to have a good 'getaway' technique.

CRITICISM

'The colour is reasonable and graphics quite good, if a bit jerky. The bird characters are animated by two frames and might have looked smoother with three. There's plenty of sound too. the chattering of birds, but it is all a bit clicky. There's not enough to it to be really addictive.'

'I wouldn't recommend this game to anyone who has a decent collection of shoot em up games, because it is only average. This sort of game has been done to death and done much better. Only the trick of dead birds turning into bombs makes it even playable. The program itself is quite adequate, but the game and its details are so out of date now.'

'I didn't think this was particularly challenging. You've got to be much more original with the plot twists today if you want to put out a 'Galaxian' type game, and this one just doesn't have any new angles at all. It's fun to play for about four minutes.





Still shooting em up in The Birds.

COMMENTS

Control keys: 6/7 left/right, zero for fire
Joystick: Sinclair 2
Keyboard play: reasonably fast
Colour: reasonable
Graphics: just average, bit jerky
Sound: reasonable
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
General rating: not enough going on to make it really worth the money

Use of computer	56%
Graphics	50%
Playability	45%
Getting started	60%
Addictive qulities	40%
Value for money	40%
Overall	**49%**

The Guardian

Producer: **P.S.S.**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**

The scene is set: you are at the gateway to the anti-matter world of Migon. Do you dare enter, will you survive? Well of course you dare enter, but whether you will survive in this mega-lightspeed game is quite another matter, or anti-matter in this case.

The simple object of the game is to speed your ship in either direction around a square which is superimposed on a space background. A smaller square is offset within the bigger, and lines radiating out from it create segments. Your ship is a sort of picture hook shaped thing that runs on the outer square. From the central square four enemy ships fly outward in three successive waves. You can centre yourself on an occupied segment and shoot the enemy with your laser, zipping around to get the next, and so on. If an enemy reaches the outer square while you are stationary on that segment — you're dead. The second screen has no segments, but meteor showers radiate out at a high speed. The third screen returns to the radial grid and the enemy are back with another danger, a V shaped energy thingie that zaps around the edges trying to get you.

Your only other weapon is a Star Smasher that destroys everything in the square. But you only have two of them. The more screens you get through, the more enemy there are. As you can see, holiday package tours keep well clear of Migon.

CRITICISM

'I liked this game, one of the best yet from P.S.S., but I can imagine that it has a specialist appeal. It is insanely fast! The ship zooms round the grid at astonishing speed, so avoiding an enemy can take you uncontrollably into another. Definately a game which develops split-second timing skills.'

'The graphics are very simple, being mostly grid lines and small sprites, but there is a good use of colour even so and everything moves very smoothly. The graphics on the Star Smasher look quite exciting. I found playing the game was too fast for my taste, but it should appeal to those arcade addicts that like hand and eye coordination games.'

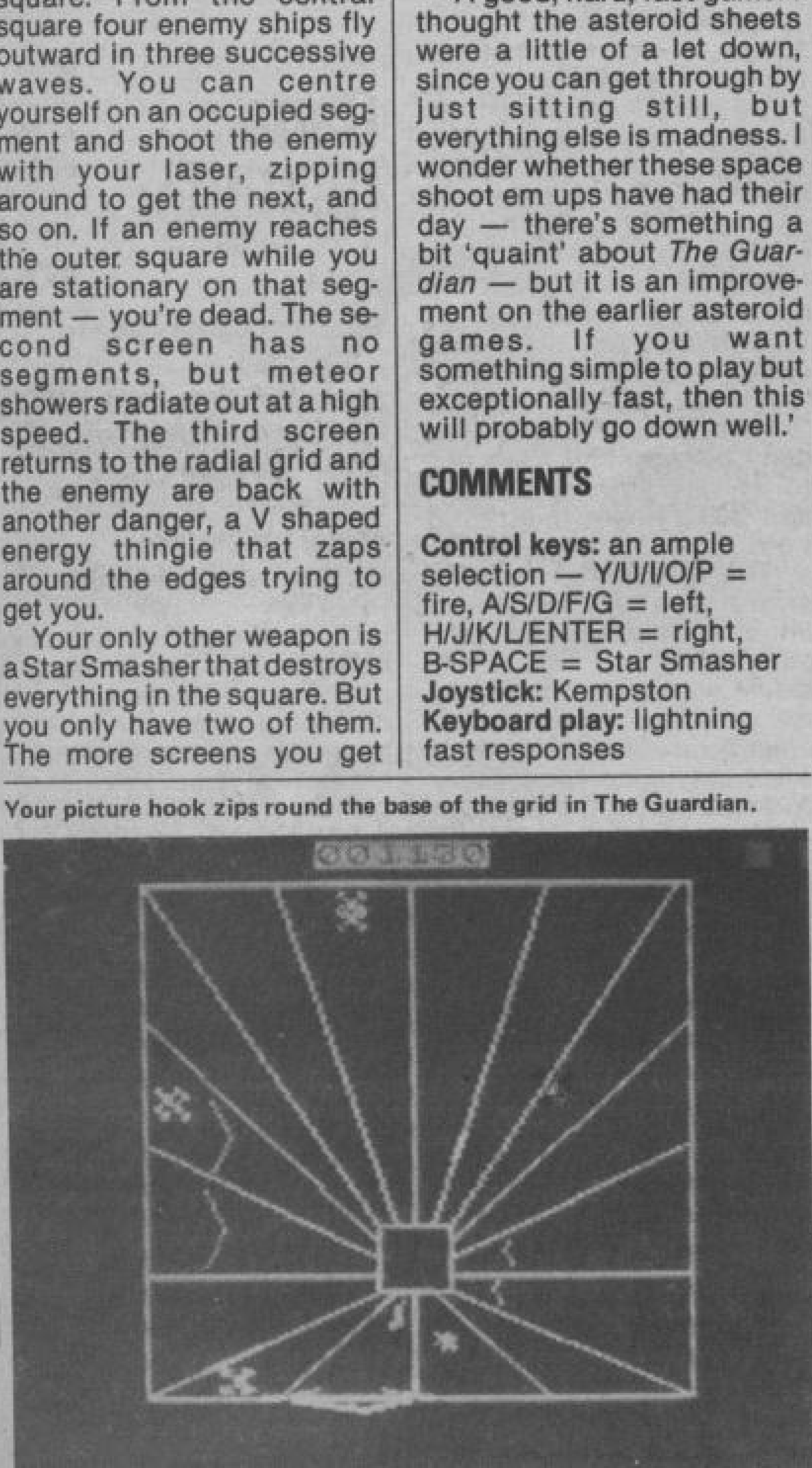
'A good, hard, fast game. I thought the asteroid sheets were a little of a let down, since you can get through by just sitting still, but everything else is madness. I wonder whether these space shoot em ups have had their day — there's something a bit 'quaint' about *The Guardian* — but it is an improvement on the earlier asteroid games. If you want something simple to play but exceptionally fast, then this will probably go down well.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: an ample selection — Y/U/I/O/P = fire, A/S/D/F/G = left, H/J/K/L/ENTER = right, B-SPACE = Star Smasher
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: lightning fast responses
Colour: simple but well used
Graphics: very simple but very fast
Sound: good
Skill levels: gets tougher by the screen
Lives: 3
General rating: specialist arcade appeal, fast and medium addictive.

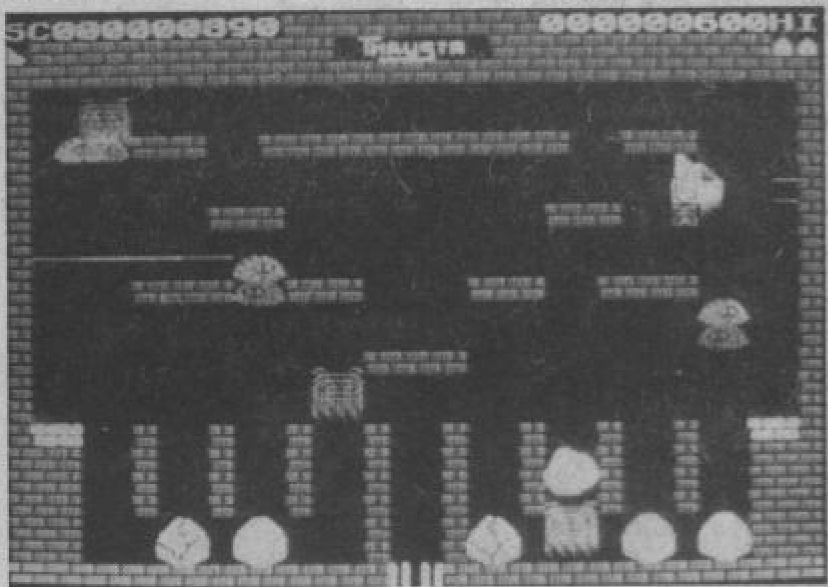
Use of computer	75%
Graphics	59%
Playability	68%
Getting started	66%
Addictive qualities	72%
Value for money	67%
Overall	68%

Your picture hook zips round the base of the grid in The Guardian.



Thrusta

Producer: **Software Projects**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Patrick Richmond**



Thrusta 1 drops a boulder on a hatching alien — but the others are cracking open. . . .

You would think that it is getting difficult to come up with an original idea for an alien shoot em up game, but with *Thrusta*, **Software Projects** seems to have done it. This is not only a shoot em up, it's also a crush em down!

Your mission takes place on the planet Spectra (where else?) where you and your space ship Thrusta 1 must destroy alien nests, whose eggs are rapidly and continuously hatching. Not only are there the hatching aliens to contend with, but there are also guards which keep watch over the eggs.

The screen has nine red brick bins at the base. In the four on either side sit the yellow alien eggs and from the centre one the alien guards issue forth to do battle. These resemble cross wing fighters, although they don't fire at you. Above the bins, or nests, are a series of four platforms with holes in them at staggered intervals — actually, more holes with platforms in them. On the top one your ship appears — and a boulder. The ship can move in four directions and fire at the guards with its laser (though not at the hatched out aliens). The object is to push the boulder along until it drops through a hole to the next level, drop down and push it again, until, finally it drops right down on the aliens and crushes them. All three sorts may be crushed.

If you get through this screen, in the next the aliens hatched out much more vicious and eager to get you.

CRITICISM

'I must say, that *Thrusta* is a unique type of game, and a very good one. It takes quite a while to complete a screen, nudging you boulders this way and that while dodging the damned aliens. As you progress to higher levels of play, the screen begins to get very crowded. There's plenty of colour, all well used on the large and smooth graphics. Definately above average and very playable, good for 16K users as well.'

'I thought the graphics were very neat with all those loathsome eggs wobbling, cracking, to reveal an ugly alien in each, and Thrusta 1 looks good too — a real



space ship at last! This turns out to be a difficult game and playable with it, each level harder than the one before.'

'*Thrusta* has an excellent keyboard layout, which makes playing very easy, while the game makes winning very hard! It looks simple when you first start, but getting those boulders down is complicated by the available routes and the aliens buzzing all over you. I found it hard to judge its addictivity, but it's very playable.'

COMMENTS

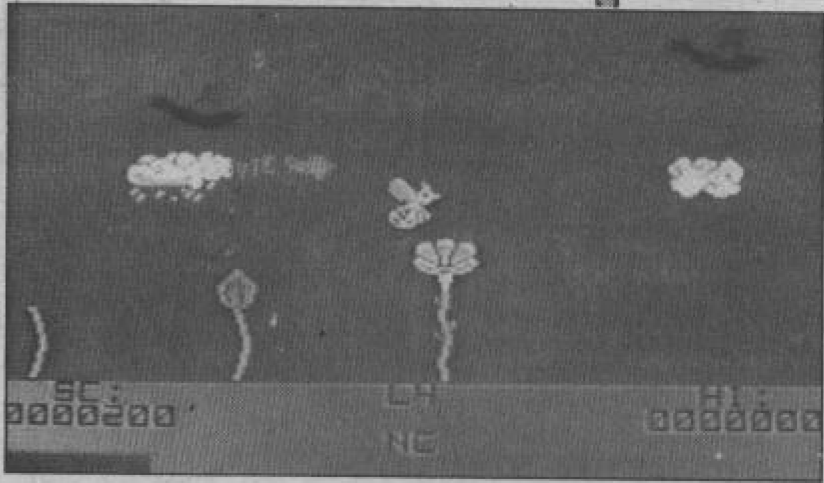
Control keys: Z/X left/right, SPACE = up, ENTER = fire. The ship sinks by itself
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: very responsive, takes time to get used to the 'gravity' effect on the ship!
Colour: very good
Graphics: very good, nice and big
Sound: continuous, above average
Skill levels: harder by screen
Lives: 3
General rating: playable, fun and generally good

Use of computer	75%
Grapnics	70%
Playability	75%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	72%
Value for money	69%
Overall	73%

The Birds and The Bees

Producer: **Bug-Byte**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Adrian Sherwin (Graphics: Matthew Smith)**

As a game type, *The Birds and The Bees* is a sort of 'Scramble' cum 'Defender' with 'Centipede' connections. It's all about Boris Bee from Birkenhead, who has discovered a fabulous field full of flowers, and dragged his hive into the field ready to start collecting nectar. Unfortunately there are a number of problems. For a start off the birds aren't too happy about the bee's intrusion, and the more nectar Boris collects, the more they chase him. Centipedes also appear, and a bear, which tries to steal the nectar from the, or rather the honey being made in there. Towards the end some wasps make an appearance. Boris's life is hard!



Boris Bee from Birkenhead behaves badly, buzzing back and forth between bunches of flowers.

The screen display shows the blue sky and green ground. The sky is full of clouds, some raining, and the sun. It's also full of various birds which fly back and forth. On the ground ducks waddle about, centipedes and caterpillars crawl up and down, and of course there are the flowers. If Boris manages to land properly on a flower, it opens up and releases its nectar. Below the main display is a bar code which shows how much nectar Boris has collected on his trip. There comes a point when he is fully loaded and must return to the hive to deposit it. The more flowers he visits, the slower he flies, and the more birds home in on him. There is also a 'Scramble' style radar screen which shows Boris's position and that of other creatures. The playing area is totally shown on this screen with the landscape scrolling back and forth as Boris flies about.

The game is compatible with the Currah Microspeech unit, which enhances the sound enormously, as well as providing spoken comments like 'Nectar' when a flower is touched, or 'Oh dear' when a bird is run into.

CRITICISM

'With a micro speech unit on, the sound is very good, but I tried it without, and it's still very good. The title tune, 'Flight of the Bumble Bee' of course, sounds marvellous. At first I thought the controls were soggy, but it becomes apparent that this is done on purpose, and simulates real life better. Boris has to slow before he can turn, and before he can change height. The more nectar he has on board the more sluggish he gets, so flight tactics and radar watching become very important to honey production! If it looks a little simple at first, don't be misled, it turns out to be very difficult to play, and satisfyingly frustrating too.'

'The graphics, as one might expect of Manic Miner's author, are very good. The bee is nicely animated, legs and wings on the go, so are the ducks and other birds, and the flowers when they snap open. Every character is big, and drawn with lots of detail. The game is a lot of fun to play, because of the graphics, and because the basic idea is quite original. I think it will prove to be quite addictive too.'

'This isn't one of those massively complex games to play, but the problems are sufficient to make it interesting and the graphics are powerful. It takes a bit of getting used to the way Boris is controlled, but once you can fly him about, you can get to be clever at avoiding the birds until they all gang up on you.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: sensible, Q/Z up/down, I/P left/right, B drops nectar to speed Boris up in an emergency
Joystick: Kempston, Protek, AGF
Keyboard play: responsive when used to it
Colour: very good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 1 gets harder
Lives: 5
Features: Currah Microspeech compatible
General rating: Very good, addictive, recommended.

Use of computer	88%
Graphics	90%
Playability	80%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	80%
Value for money	83%
Overall	83%

Games Designer

Producer: **Quicksilva/software Studios**
Memory required: **48K**
Recommended retail price: **£14.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **John Hollis**

If you're tired of actually playing games perhaps you might like to have a go at designing one yourself? Of course a lot of Spectrum owners are not programming geniuses, so **Quicksilva** have now brought out a package which at least offers control over the various features of some standard arcade games. In a way it's the computer equivalent of the chemistry kit.

Games Designer comes packed in a neat betamax-sized video cassette box, and contains a detailed booklet on the program. On loading the program the first thing you are offered is a main menu with a list of eight options: *Play Game, Select New Game, Alter Sprites, Configuration, Movement,*

Attack Waves, Load from Tape, Save to Tape.

At any time, pressing *ENTER* returns you to the main menu. Selecting *Play Game* allows you to play whichever is the 'current' of the eight different games included in the program. Control keys may be altered to suit the users own preferred layout. The second option, *Select New Game*, lets you choose between any of the other seven games. The eight titles are: *Attack of the Mutant Hamburgers, Cyborg, Reflecttron, Turbo-Spider, Tanks a Lot, Halloween, Splat* and *Qbix*.

Having played these as they exist, you may fancy redesigning them. Option three allows the sprites to be altered and a menu tells you what can be done. This includes the shapes of the aliens, ships or laser bases, missiles and bombs, shields and explosion sequences. Their colours can be changed as well. Having selected the sprite type to be altered a sprite editor fills the screen, showing all the pixels that make up the sprite. These can then be manipulated from the keyboard without difficulty.

Configuration, the fourth option, allows you to alter the way the game takes place. You can change the game format, control keys and joystick options; the background and foreground colours may be altered; special effects can be changed; and there are four classes of sound effect which can be played with, missile sounds, bomb sounds, ship explosions and alien explosions. Selecting one of these keys brings the sound editor into play, a visual display of faders controlling the overall frequency or pitch of the sound; the speed at which pitch increases; or decreases; length of sound.

Option five is *Movement*. This controls the patterns and pattern movement of aliens/ objects/ships etc. Again an editor is used with visual display so that you can create almost any pattern or movement you like.

Option six allows you to alter the attack waves of the aliens, including the animation, points awarded for each destroyed, pattern under which they start a game, numbers of aliens in each attack wave, whether or not they drop bombs, and also what pattern of attack wave follows the 'current' one.

The last two options allow you to save your redesigned game or reload it.

Obviously this is a very complex program, which allows great flexibility and offers enjoyment on two levels, both playing and designing. The instruction booklet is well designed, very clear, and includes a technical appendix which may be of interest, as well as various tables to aid games design. They have also been thoughtful enough to provide blank pages at the end for the player's own notes.

Any combination of control keys or joysticks may be accommodated as desired.

CRITICISM

'Excellent packaging and instructions. The eight pre-programmed games are quite simple but the graphics are of good quality, and anything can be redesigned. The variations and experiments are endless.'

'I was disappointed by the actual games pre-programmed, which were all very simple. But then, half the fun is redesigning everything, and it's possible to make some very bloody-minded and hard to play games from this little package.'

'The graphics are excellent, and I'm not talking about the game graphics but those on the various menues. The little 'fader' type visuals are wonderful.'

'The program is user-friendly so you don't have to be an expert in machine code programming. Even at £15 **Games Designer** *represents good value for money.'*

COMMENTS

Keyboard positions: up to you!
Joystick options: up to you!
Keyboard play: positive
Use of colour: up to you!
Graphics: excellent and then up to you!
Sound: up to you!
Skill levels: up to you!
Lives: uo to you!
General rating: Highly recommended

Since the ratings hardly apply to this program we asked the reviewers to give an overall percentage. **It was 92%.**

LASERWARP

Producer: **Mikrogen**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **C. Hinsley**

Mikrogen claim that this game has it all. It certainly has quite a lot anyway! It is a very simple shoot em up which has you in control of a laser base while every known electronic alien in the universe is falling on you, swooping at you and hurling indestructible missiles of all shapes and sizes at you. 'Paranoia' might be a more apt title!

The various aliens (depends on the level of play chosen) each have different movement characteristics and drop different types of missiles, including very mean, red-coloured heat seeking missiles which veer towards the laser base as they get lower, following slightly as it moves away.

Surviving ten attack waves leaves you facing 'The Master' who sounds like a nasty piece of work. Should you destroy him, he returns stronger than ever. The universe was never an easy place...

CRITICISM

'The game works quite well as a shoot em up, and I like the idea of many aliens on screen at one time. The downward scrolling star background works nicely too, and in general the graphics are good. It has well used colours although I thought they seemed a little dull (dark).'

'A very busy screen, which keeps you constantly on your toes. Strong graphics and plenty of them, reasonable sound and a very lively shoot em up. Two oddities though, the inlay says user-definable keys, but I couldn't find any, and the game hardly requires them anyway. Also the instructions on screen say N/L = Fire, when actually it's ENTER. Still, a very good game with a straightforward appeal.'

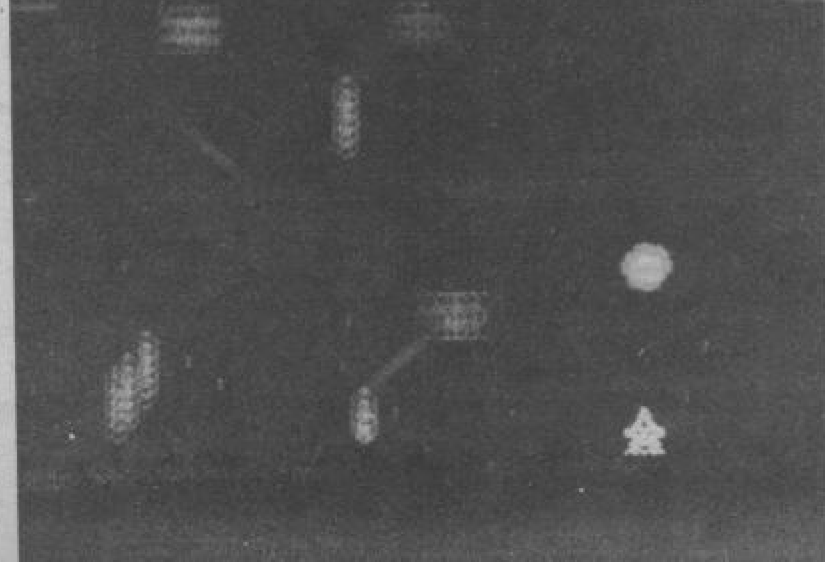
'*Laserwarp*is the latest and greatest shoot em up game. It's highly addictive and fun to play. This may even challenge Imagine's *Arcadia* as the best ever Spectrum shoot em up. Extremely good value for money if you like arcade games. Only one niggle — the laser base fires rather slowly.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: S/D left/right, ENTER = fire
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: responsive, but laser can only have one shot on screen at a time
Colour: varied and reasonable
Graphics: very good
Sound: good
Skill levels: 5
Lives: 3
Screens: 10 waves plus master
General rating: very good

Use of computer	88%
Graphics	85%
Playability	78%
Getting started	50%
Addictive qualities	80%
Value for money	80%
Overall	77%

Laserwarp — such a fast game the camera fails to capture the speed of the alien hordes.



CRASH MICRO GAMES ACTION

'PARDON ME, I'LL SAY THAT AGAIN!'



FRANCO FREY
takes a NOI$$$Y listen to the

CURRAH μSPEECH

Ever had your mother constantly nagging at you while playing something interesting? Well, now you can improve the situation by having the Spectrum do the same. Impossible? Not any more with the **Microspeech** unit. The only difference is that the voice will sound like a Dalek rather than a Siren (your mother) and that you can switch it off whenever you feel like it (Try that with your mother)!

Considering the power of voice, the unit is very compact and installing it is kid's stuff. You also gain a beep amplifier, because the sound is directed through your TV speaker. The detailed **Programming Manual** and **Demonstration Tape** display the whole 'voice' Spectrum at your disposal and if you can't get to grips with it, try listening to your mother now and again.

Technically the unit is an **allophone** system, which means that like you and I it doesn't care about the writing or spelling of the words, but simply speaks by concatenating speech sounds (allophones). To this purpose the string variable s$ has been reserved, which can be assigned by a LET statement:

LET s$ = "ssaavEE": PAUSE 1 and on pressing ENTER the unit will detect with the PAUSE period the s$ and the inbuilt allophone interpreter will convert the allophone symbols within the string into speech code and place this into a **FIFO** (first in first out) buffer. The code in the buffer will automatically be output to the speech chip, while the BASIC program continues.

The FIFO buffer resides near the top of memory between RAMTOP and UDG area and depending on the length of the buffer RAMTOP will have to be lowered with a CLEAR statement. The speech unit initialises RAMTOP on start-up to allow for a 256 byte buffer (RAMTOP = 65111 on a 48K machine) but this can be increased to the detriment of the BASIC memory area. There are 64 allophone codes and therefore 64 allophone symbols to choose from.

A one step intonation facility is provided (Daleks also get excited and raise their voices!) by using upper case letters (adds decimal 64 to the allophone code). You can create a word or phrase library by assigning string variables consecutively to the reserved s$ string (always with PAUSE 1 in between), or you can concatenate individual string variables to form s$. A more compact solution is to use a string array and concatenate and even slice the individual array elements.

If you don't mind operating with allophone codes directly, you can bypass the interpreter and operate directly on the FIFO buffer by POKEing the codes directly into the buffer memory area. Once loaded you set the stack pointer to one below the last item in the buffer to be voiced by POKEing the stack pointer and — bedlam! Your Spectrum becomes an instant party killer! Loading the buffer can be executed with a small BASIC loader program either via INPUT command or via DATA statements:

```
10  LET a = 65361
20  READ b: LET x = b
30  FOR n = 1 TO (x - 1): READ b
40  POKE a,b
50  LET a = a - 1
60  NEXT n
70  POKE 65365, 255
80  POKE 65364, (65361 - a)
100 DATA 21,41,39,24,24,24,37,1,16,70,
    41,39,53,3,19,55,3,34,14,20,13,55
```




```
10  LET a = 65361
20  INPUT "INPUT "; (65362 - a);
    ", CODE = "; b: IF b = 0 THEN
    GO TO 80
30  POKE a, b
40  LET a = a - 1
50  GO TO 20
100 FOR c = 65361 TO (a + 1) STEP -1
110 PRINT c, PEEK c
120 NEXT c
130 PRINT a, 65361 - a: PRINT:
    PRINT "PRESS s TO RUN"
140 IF INKEY$ = "s" THEN GO TO 200
150 GO TO 140
200 POKE 65365, 255
210 POKE 65364, (65361 - a)
```

Whatever way you choose, always make sure your stack area doesn't drop below



RAMTOP or your BASIC program will crash... In a similar way the machine code afficionado can (man) handle the FIFO and stack pointer directly from assembler or native code and so incorporate voice into his silent Dalek game. Mind you, in space nobody can hear even the Spectrum scream!

If all this is softwearing you down and you are 'first and foremost' a game player, have no fear: The Currah Microspeech is rapidly becoming an industry standard add-on and the list below gives a hint of the games which already include voice facility. But beware of using the speech unit in combination with non compatible programs: BASIC and m/c programs will undoubtedly crash or develop unwanted and potentially dangerous side effects due to the clashing of the FIFO buffer area with the program's own stack or program area (Play *DEATHCHASE* or *ATIC ATAC* and you'll know what I mean).

If you're wondering where to plug in your joystick interface, be ready for a surprise: Neither Kempston nor Protek, or most of the other joystick interfaces make provision for an extension edge connector except AGF Cambridge and Sinclair (Interface II). It would appear that most of these companies rely on the fact that they are the last link in the add-on chain and can price their products more competitively due to the cost reduction. And since Currah would appear to have been thinking along the same lines, it will be up to you the games player to sort out the bottleneck: The only sensible solution is a 56 way flat cable loom which plugs via a 28 position doublesided 0.1' IDC edge connector socket to the Spectrum with two or three IDC edge connector plugs along the length of the loom, so that the various add-ons may be connected up together (A motherboard with several edge connectors ports will also do). Certainly not a cheap solution. Considering the fact that a games player will almost certainly require a joystick and the speech unit, this is definitely a huge drawback.

Throughout the usage of the Currah Microspeech you will become increasingly neurotic and paranoid, believing to hear each and every word or thought repeated by an inhuman voice. Before consulting your psychiatrist, try entering LET keys = 0 and you will find immediate remedy and absolute tranquility while you key in your latest software creation: This command will disable the voicing of all the BASIC keywords and printable characters and you will instantly be able to hear yourself think again...

CRITICISM

Simple and small unit. Also acts as only a sound amplifier by diverting BEEP sound to TV loudspeaker. Easy programming from BASIC and m/c as the unit is totally independent. It only requires feeding of a stack and setting of a stack pointer. But, as stack pointer and flagbytes reside in top of Spectrum memory: A) in BASIC, RAMTOP has to be moved down to protect this area; B) in m/c games, this area may already be used and system will crash or go funny. Fortunately more and more software houses take this into acount. Allophone set is limited, but works well (for English language). Intonation limited to one step only. Various buffers may be used, switching between them by changing the stack pointers.

Price: High for a Spectrum add-on, but considering the complexity of the unit (speech chip controlled by allophone symbol interpreter/microprocessor) a small miracle. The unit comes packaged in an attractive card box with transparent window, complete with demonstration cassette, programming manual and all necessary connections. May be used with either 16K or 48K Spectrum. Price £29.90.

LUNAR JETMAN	Ultimate
BLASTERMIND	Martech
BIRDS & BEES	Bug-Byte
COLOURCLASH	Romik
SHARK ATTACK	Romik
3D MONSTER CHASE	Romik
VOICE CHESS	Artic
THE GOLDEN BATON	Digital Fantasia
THE TIME MACHINE	Digital Fantasia
ARROW OF DEATH I	Digital Fantasia
ARROW OF DEATH II	Digital Fantasia
FIREBIRDS	Lyversoft
LUNAR RESCUE	Lyversoft
MINED-OUT	Quicksilva
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Author – Tony Churcher. Spectrum 48K – £4.95.





Moria A challenging adventure game set in the mines of Moria. You'll have to try and survive encounters with the monsters of middle-earth while trying to locate Durins Ring. The Wizard and the Trader may help or hinder you on your journey to find and open the hidden doors to freedom – a game that will really test your character and staying power.
Author – Mike Howard. Spectrum 16/48K – £4.95.



Jogger Guide your joggers across a 4-lane motorway and crocodile infested river to reach their safe haven through the gap in the fence. Each time a jogger is safely home the next one will have to encounter more lorries and cars on the motorway but fewer crocodiles and logs in the river. Full on-screen instructions. M/code, sound effects and full action colour graphics. Author – Mike Howard. Spectrum 16/48K – £4.95.

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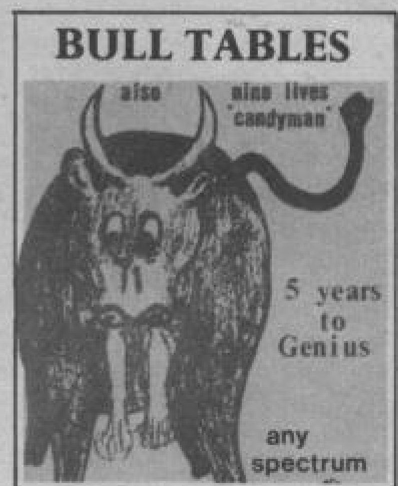
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LIVING GUIDE TO SPECTRUM SOFTWARE









Crash Guide Game of the Month

Our reviewer **Matthew Uffindell** delves into his software library for this month's reappraisal as he hops onto **FROGGY**, the most engaging Frogger for the Spectrum, a game by **D.J.L. Software**.

As long as you can go along with the fact that frogs drown if they fall in the river, then as a game type 'Froggers' have a lot going for them. The object of the game is to guide your frog across a busy road without getting squashed under the vehicles, and then across the river on logs and turtle backs without falling off, getting eaten by crocodiles or run off the screen edge, and so into a frog home on the far bank.

On the road in this version, there are trucks and much faster hot rods to leap between. The river has four lanes alternating between logs and rows of turtles, each moving in the opposite direction to the other. You must hop from one to the other without falling into the other river. The turtles have a nasty habit of submerging, and if this happens while you are riding on one, you will lose a life if you don't jump across to a log in time.

Once onto the last lane (logs) you must jump neatly into one of the five frog homes. A miss-jump loses a life — a successful one results in a large smiling frog in his home. Every now and then a baby frog appears, floating down the river on a log and crying out for you to rescue it. To do this you must jump onto the log carrying him and let it leap up onto your back. If you get him safely home a bonus of 200 points is awarded.

As the game goes on more hazards appear, such as aligators in the river and snakes on the bank of the river. The game will also speed up as each screen is cleared, until the maximum speed is reached on screen 7. Turtles also get scarcer and the logs get smaller in size. The entire game is played against the clock — about 25 seconds is allowed to get a frog across and home on screen one, but this reduces with each screen. There is also a demo mode and a hall of fame.

This game is a very good copy of the arcade original and is very well produced. When I first saw it I though the character block movement would spoil the game, but I was proved wrong. It is very addictive and enjoyable to play. This must be the best 'Frogger' around and I would recommend it to anyone. The game plays with a Kempston joystick (load one side of tape) or cursor keys (load other side of tape) and so cursor key joysticks like Protek and AGF. Use of colour and sound is excellent as are the instructions and general presentation.

Matthew Uffindell.



Nice frog homes – low deposit, mortgages available – DJL's charming game turns a frog into a prince.

GUIDE SPECTRUM

CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

This is the heart of the magazine! A perpetually updated guide to Spectrum software. It is intended as a brief but comprehensive listing for ready reference and not as a detailed criticism of the games (although we will always reflect the original reviewers' comments in the entry). You will find detailed reviews of newer programs in previous issues, the number of the issue being indicated in brackets after the retail price.

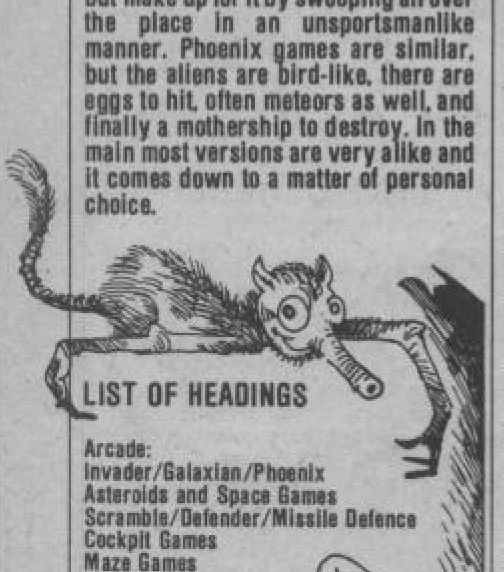
The mammoth task of ensuring that every program for the Spectrum gets reviewed in brief for this section still goes on as we go to press, so certainly for the next two or three issues *The Living Guide* won't be thoroughly complete.

Programs are listed under convenient headings (a list of the headings is given below). Under each heading, programs are listed alphabetically by title, we then show the software producer's name, memory required to run the program, its recommended retail price and, where known, the author of the program.

Reviews indicate what joystick option has been provided by the producer, if any. Programmable interfaces may obviously be used with almost all programs regardless of joystick options. Please note that the use of the word *joystick* invariably refers to the type of joystick interface that can be used.

INVADER/ GALAXIAN/ PHOENIX

Space Invaders began it all and the more sophisticated Galaxian and Phoenix games continued it. The games listed under this heading are among the oldest available for the Spectrum. Consequently some versions have not stood the test of time as well as others. In Invaders seried ranks of varied aliens jiggle across the screen getting lower and lower. Galaxians attack in lesser numbers but make up for it by swooping all over the place in an unsportsmanlike manner. Phoenix games are similar, but the aliens are bird-like, there are eggs to hit, often meteors as well, and finally a mothership to destroy. In the main most versions are very alike and it comes down to a matter of personal choice.



LIST OF HEADINGS

ARCADIA
Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
Generally considered to be the best shoot 'em up game around. Aliens come in droves from the right, each wave more suicidal than the last. Continuous fire and thrust (to half the screen height only) with good keyboard positions. Excellent hi-res smooth graphics. Joystick: Kempston (and softlink II) or Fuller. Addictive and difficult to master.

ASTRO BLASTER
Producer: Quicksilva, 16K £4.95
Author: John Edwards
Quicksilva's go at galaxian/phoenix is creditably fast and difficult to master, featuring five attack waves in three phases — Cybird, Meteor and Plasma, each of which have their own characteristics. Oddly enough the first wave is the most difficult. You're given five shields. Graphics and sound are neat. Joystick: Kempston.

COSMIC GUERILLA
Producer: Crystal, 16K £5.50
This game is a copy of an arcade shoot 'em up and almost makes a category of its own. Aliens stand in several vertical columns on either side of the screen. The centre block is a stack of humans and your three space ships (and lives). Your ship is at the base, firing up. Aliens zip across to the centre, grab a human and abduct him to the side. Eventually they can get at the three ships and steal those. For each one they get to the side you lose a life. Too rapid fire shortens the range so it's better to be accurate than fast. Features fast motherships that zip along the base just above your head and fire at you, rapid mutants and six difficulty levels. Joystick: Kempston. Recommended.

FIREBIRDS
Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Author: Graeme Devine
A classic phoenix. Fire rate and left/right movement are the best we've seen. Beautiful graphics featuring red Firebirds, blue Bombers, and white Weavers in an intricate dance of death. 100 percent machine code. Very difficult to get to see the mothership, but worth it! Highly recommended.

FIREHAWKS
Producer: Postern, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: D Hoskins & C Davies
Firehawks is literally a Phoenix game but practically it's an Invader mutation. Your mission is to defend your planet from the deadly Firehawks of the title. They come in search of energy, and should one be allowed to land it turns into a giant Phoenix and flaps away — end of game. The birds line up at the top of the screen and you fire up with your laser beam. In the way are plasma screens which resemble decorative breeze blocks. The birds have to get round them and you must shoot them away to get at the birds. Graphics are quite large but there's no animation, and despite the 15 skill levels and 15 speeds it doesn't add up to much and is overpriced. No joystick option, poor control key response, good sound, generally fair. Overall CRASH rating 51%. BASIC + some code.

GALACTIC ABDUCTORS
Producer: Anirog, 16K £5.95
This version features large animated graphics. The aliens weave fanciful patterns when attacking and have the cute habit of eating your population when you're not looking, only throwing back their skulls. 100 percent machine code. Hi-score. Joystick option.

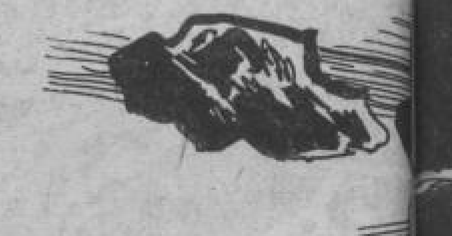
GALACTIC TROOPER
Producer: Romik, 16K £5.99
Author: Ian Morrison
Halfway between an invader and galaxian type, this three skill level game offers reasonably attractive graphics and plenty of them. You're at the base firing up at ten bomb racks containing five aliens per rack. Above them a mothership floats lazily from left to right and back again. To hit it you must blast out all five aliens from a rack so you can fire through the gap. Aliens reproduce fast! For more points there are a few saucers that venture out, but they're easy to hit. The aliens drop bombs on you but the screen is so full that the dropping distance is small and they are hard to dodge. Skill doesn't appear to be a factor, rather luck. Hi-score. Joystick: Kempston or Sinclair, machine code, only average value for money.

GALAKZIONS
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
One of the weaker games with three skill levels and attackers more resembling invader aliens than anything else. The rate of continuous fire is wrong for the slow attack patterns, robbing the game of any excitement. Works with Mikrogen II joystick. Machine code. One or two player games.

GALAXIANS
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
A good copy and a classic version with nine levels of play, hi-score, personalised scoring, one or two playere games. Features swooping Galaxians and hi-res explosions. Joystick: Kempston. Machine code. Very good value for money.

HAWKS
Producer: Lotus-Soft, 16K £5.50 (1)
Author: Derek Jones
This is a pretty hefty shoot em up where you're pitted against waves of hawks which drop eggs. These eggs hatch out in the ground and become mutant hawks which form up for later attacks. You are in control of an old Asteroid Mining Vehicle which can fire missiles at the birds and falling eggs, a laser and also lay mines over the downed eggs. These also blow up the vehicle if they go off under it. There are a large number of control keys so speed and reflexes are of the essence. Good colours and graphics, plenty to do and exciting to play. Good control key positions and reasonable sound, multiple skill levels. General rating, good & addictive, overall CRASH rating 75%. 100% M/C.

HEADBANGER
Producer: Llamasoft, 48K £4.95
Llamasoft is one of those companies that got famous fast, though looking at this game one wonders why. The sky is raining hammers (makes a change from ravening aliens I suppose) and Chico must carry bags of money from one side of the screen to the other under the partial shelter of four blocks which are being eroded by the falling hammers. In between the shelters Chico can nut the hammers for points, but after ten he gets a headache and must then nut a red aspirin hammer. Hammers hitting his body instead of his head lose a life. Getting a money bag across safely restores one shelter. Badly put together and rather pointless.



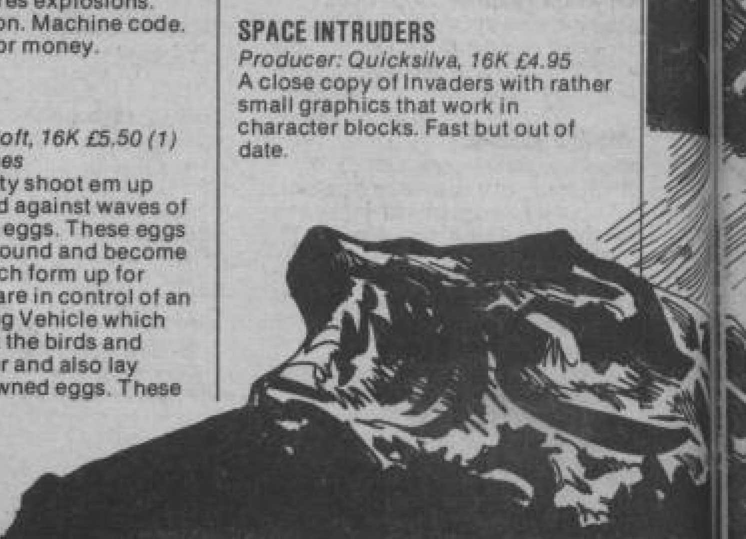


INVADERS
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Although this is a standard and close copy of the original, the hi-res graphics stand up quite well to the test of time. Nine levels of play and four variations of alien.

INVASION FORCE
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Artic's engaging and addictive phoenix game has the mothership protected by a force field hovering above your base. Should your missiles hit it they are returned back as three! The mothership is only vulnerable in its control centre. There are loads of bomb-dropping aliens flapping around. Three lives, two skill levels and harder screens. Neat touch — if your base is hit the Artic lorry rushes out to repair it between lives. Generally recommended.

KAMIKAZE
Producer: A&F, 16K £5.75
Basically a galaxian game. Pit your wits against wave after wave of suicidal fighter aircraft which swoop down on you dropping bombs. Clear two screens and you get a bonus screen against easy-to-hit helicopters before returning to the main feature. Graphics are attractive if a bit flickery and the mushroom shaped explosions are good. Continuous sound of attacking aircraft unless you drown them out with the sound of your continuous fire. Hall of fame, no joystick option.

SPACE INTRUDERS
Producer: Quicksilva, 16K £4.95
A close copy of Invaders with rather small graphics that work in character blocks. Fast but out of date.



SPACE RAIDERS
Producer: Psion, 16K £4.95
Another close Invaders copy with better graphics than Space Intruders, but slower and not particularly addictive to play.

SPACE ZOMBIES
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
One critic thought this was pathetic, another liked it. Certainly a 'quaint' game. You're at the screen base firing up at a bunch of highly coloured alien zombies which chug about the screen like a train, getting longer with each screen. The graphics are big, there's continuous fire, a nice moving star background, and the main feature is the erratic and highly unpredictable movement of the aliens. Three speeds, one or two player games, plenty of levels (at least six before I got killed off). Joystick: Mikrogen II, good value but not terribly addictive.

ASTEROIDS/SPACE

With some exceptions, Asteroid type games tend to be less colourful than most arcade programs – some are virtually black and white, but the category is still one of the most popular. Also included under this heading are 'space' games which have very little to do with asteroids.

CONFUSION
Producer: Blaby, 58K £4.95
There's something of a 'frogger' feel to this ultra-fast game. Alien ships zip along parallel tracks which you must traverse, shooting them for points. Impossible without a joystick and difficult with, goes with Kempston or AGF or Protek. Generally less than one expects from the usually excellent Blaby people.

control keys are laid out for the Sinclair joystick—they're very awkward. A popular game for shoot em up addicts with plenty of playability, but maybe lacking in great lasting appeal. Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston. 6 skill levels, 5 lives. CRASH rating: fairly good, overall 63% M/C.

COSMIC DEBRIS
Producer: Artic, 48K £4.95
An archetypal 'asteroids' game with hardly any colour at all. Hollow outlines for the asteroids which shatter into smaller fragments when hit. Rotate, thrust and hyperspace and typically nasty flying saucers that appear when you don't need them. Two speeds (fast and suicidal — and they mean it!) with bonus ships for points. A game this fast should have continuous fire facility, but doesn't. No popular joystick facility. Good value for asteroid addicts who like a fast game.

KOSMIC PIRATE
Producer: Blaby, 48K £4.95
There's a factory below on the planet which you must plunder, guiding your ship through the heavy alien space traffic. deceptively simply looking game with good graphics and sound and really a 'frogger' variant. M/C. Joystick: Kempston.

METEROIDS
DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
In a way it's as well this game is in the cheaper bracket because it isn't a very good program. The graphics are jerky in movement and the relative speed of craft to asteroids is too slow. Worst of all you can only use one function at a time so you can't fire while rotating or thrusting. There is a useful 'redefine' function which allows you to change keyboard options and alter the way in which the game plays. No joystick facility, unless redefined to cursor keys to use AGF or Protek.



TERROR DAKTIL 3D
Producer: Melbourne House, 48K £6.95
Not, you might think by the title, a galaxian/invader type game, but it is really. There's a 3D landscape and 2D massed Daktils in the distance moving jsut like space invaders. To hit them you must get the dimensional trajectory of your 'battered' cannon correct. Frequently one will swoop down on you in very good animated line drawing. You get more points for hitting the swooping ones, but it's safer to dodge them. Not up to Melbourne House's usual standard and the sound — what happened to it?

THE DETECTIVE
Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50
Another game which sounds unlikely as a galaxian type contender, but then, we couldn't quite figure what the title had to do with the game. But it is a good game anyway. Nice packaging as usual from Arcade and reflected in the graphics. Avoid the falling objects which change characteristic by level or shoot them for points. Tyres (?!) form up like thunderclouds and fall on you, a wretched dog keeps stealing your points. Avoid him by using the wrap-around screen. 25 levels. Joystick: Kempston and AGF or Protek. Good value.

WINGED AVENGER
Producer: Workforce, 16K £5.00
Something of a cult among galaxian fans, with two options (2-part load) for the 'brave' and 'also-rans'. Six skill levels, laser, forcefield barrier and simple but effective graphics. This is a fast game for the experts — novices might not even realise they've lost all their lives. Disappointing graphics and ultimately not of lasting appeal.

BLACK HOLE
Producer: Fantasy, 16K £5.50
Centre screen is the Black Hole, from which emerge three types of alien craft. Two of your weapons are deflected by the force of the Black Hole, which makes aiming difficult, and the third weapon has a limited range. Indiscriminate shooting leads to loss of power, and the aliens fire back. To make matters worse there is space debris to avoid on the left of screen, the area to which you're confined. Control in eight directions, but too many keys make this game hard to enjoy, and there are too many for a joystick to handle.

BLOCKADE RUNNER
Producer: Thorn EMI, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Graham Johns
Just when you thought they had run out of reasonably original deep space zappowham games, along comes Blockade Runner. You're in this supply ship, running the blockade of earth by some nasty aliens and there are 5 layers of defences to get through. First a dense shower of meteors which can be dodged or shot, then a layer of vertical laser barriers which you must dodge, then tractor beam units try to pull you off course, finally a fleet of alien ships try to blast you to kingdom come. Should you survive this frenetic gauntlet, you must then transfer your cargo pods to an earth ship. Control response is frightenly fast and violent—it has to be to dodge the laser beams. Pity the

DEEP SPACE
Producer: PSS, 48K £5.95
A standard version of asteroids with rotate left and right, thrust, hyperspace and fire, wrap around screen and alien ships. Can't comment on the game's quality since none of our three review copies would load.

JETPAC
Producer: Ultimate, 16K £5.50
There's not much can be said about Ultimate that hasn't already been said. Graphics and presentation are of the highest standard. In Jetpac you must get your spaceman to assemble a rocket and fuel it, steal as many gems as you can and avoid the irate aliens or kill them with the laser. When assembled the rocket takes off for another planet to plunder. Re-assemble the ship after five planets. Five levels of different aliens. Joystick: Kempston. One or Two player games, continuous fire and movement in eight directions. Highly recommended.

METEOR STORM
Quicksilva, 16K £4.95
Mercifully, Quicksilva have proved their originality in the games field by going onto games which make this one look as silly as it is. If you like asteroid games then this is pretty fast. Simple outlines hover in a blank black space. Ship orientation is in eight directions using all the number keys which means you can't concentrate on the game.

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95 (1)
Author: Jeremy Brown
This is a Lander type game where you must guide your craft down to a planet's surface and rescue stranded astronauts or miners or something and return them to the mothership above. To get down to the planet you must dodge your way through the masses of asteroids, and then return through layers of enemy shipping. Controls provide a retro rocket for braking, important when landing as an inaccurate or fast landing results in death. On the return journey the retro becomes a gun to shoot at the aliens. On higher levels there is also a force field as a added hazard. Throughout, the graphics are very good and move smoothly. Thus is a very difficult game and bound to be addictive. Takes time to get good at it. Sensible control keys, joystick: AGF, Protek or Kempston. 3 playing speeds, over 50 screens, generally recommended. Overall CRASH rating 80% M/C.

PLANETOIDS

Producer: Psion, 16K £4.95
A very good copy and a classic version with the best graphics of the lot. Nice bright yellow asteroids which shatter satisfyingly. A bit slow, although the shattered fragments change direction and move faster. Alien ships are well defined graphically. Using Z/X for rotation and SPACE/ENTER for fire/thrust is quite good, but H for hyperspace takes some getting to in an emergency. No skill levels, which means the addictivity rating is low, but good value at the price. No joystick option.

SCHIZOIDS

Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
Imagine come up with some of the best games — this isn't one of them. You're supposed to clear the space lanes of civilisation's debris by bulldozing it into a black hole in the centre of the screen. The graphics are black and white, though nicely drawn but the game is confusing. Joystick: Fuller.

SENTINEL

Producer: Abacus, 16K £5.00
Prevent the enemy from attacking the five Sentinel space stations with your four ships. Careful though — your three remaining ships (lives) are docked with the station so if your protective screen isn't effective you can lose lives before you've even had a chance to use them! Enemy comes in various forms and meteroids make life impossible at times. Your weapons are laser and a guided missile so you have to contend with left/right rotation, thrust, laser fire, missile fire and two controls for guiding it, which makes Sentinel a game for the four-handed player! Oh, and there's a force field for the station — five-handed player! A good fast and furious game. Good value. No joystick option.

SHUTTLE

Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.95
Take your shuttle craft from the mothership and descend to two specially created landing spaces on the planet's hilly surface to rescue the stranded astronauts, which stand on the hillsides waving their arms frantically. You can only take one at a time and landing results in the nearest dashing to your craft and partial safety. Unfortunately the sky is crowded with bi-directional meteors. The graphics are cute and the sound very good, but theinlay card suggests you can fire at something when you can't. Avoiding the meteors is simply done by dodging them (a sort of frogger). Not the most addictive of Blaby's games, but still very playable. Joystick: Kempston, AGF or Protek.

SPECTROID STORM

Producer: Abersoft, 48K £4.95
A very new asteroid game and one of the most colourful with a pretty packed screen. Wrap around action and multi-shaped objects. Good acceleration and braking but requires a tender touch as the action is quite violent. Hyperspace, no difficulty levels. It looks good but it needs more playability to put it in the top rank. Joystick: Kempston,AGF or Protek.

3 DEEP SPACE

Producer: Postern, 16K £7.95 (1)
This is the, by now, famous real 3D game which uses red and blue spectacles to create a three dimensional feeling. Sadly the effect doesn't come off at all, with few people reporting any success with the effect. On top of that, the game itself is not sufficiently exciting enough to be worth the very high price asked. Basically you ship moves vertically at the left of screen, confronting the alien ships which move from right to left. You can 'zoom' in and out of the screen to match the depth of the attacking vessels. 6 control keys, no joystick option, smooth movement but not colourful and only average sound. Overall CRASH rating M/C.

VIOLENT UNIVERSE

Producer: Fantasy, 16K £5.50
This game has an essential difference — instead of firing ahead, you lay gas clouds behind you to destroy the aliens. The aliens are made of anti-matter, so as they rush headling into your vapour clouds they're anihilated. You must score 1000 points within 40 seconds to get to the next level, an idea which makes this game extremely addictive to play. Wrap around screen, 8-directional movement in a very crowded screen. Hiding inside one of your vapour clouds is a sneaky way of avoiding death. Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek, Fuller or Mikrogen II. Good value.

SCRAMBLE/ DEFENDER/ MISSILE DEFENCE

For many arcade enthusiasts defender and scramble games are the kings of flying, shoot 'em ups. They require quick reflexes and excellent hand/eye control. Of the home computer they demand programs with sensible control key layouts or joysticks for good results. In scramble games you fly a mission against a hidden enemy base, whereas as in defender games you must rescue humanity at the same time. In either case the game is played in profile, showing the topography of the ground over which you are flying. Missile defence is simpler, showing missile traces descending on your cities. You must guide the anti-missile defence by sighting cross hairs at the leading points of the enemy missile traces.

ARMAGEDDON

Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
This version is a classic missile defence game with excellent graphics, especially the sunburst explosions. The missile traces split into several traces, coming thicker and faster with each wave. The available number of missiles in your armoury for each wave is shown at the base of the screen and above that are your six cities which you are protecting. After each attack wave the program updates your score and cities left. Nice title graphics and 'end' card. Recommended.

ARMAGEDDON

Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95 (1)
Author: C Knight
Silversoft's version of the much-copied 'Missile Command' arcade original is well up to scratch with good use of colour, and average sound. The graphics are simple but effective with very nice explosions and a suitably disgusting frying sound to accompany them. Features six cities, three missile bases, aircraft and bomb-dropping satellites,a nd heat sensitive missiles which hover above a detonation until it's safe to descend further. Gets increasingly fast, medium addictive, sensible control keys and Kempston joystick (via a 2-part load). Overall CRASH rating 68% M/C.

COSMIC RAIDERS

Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
'One of the few times an arcade game has been improved upon,' said *Personal Computing Today*. That



might be a bit exaggerated, but the graphics and control response are very good indeed. You must race across the planet and destroy the alien master ships in the lair. The cityscape beneath is densely populated and green grabbers keep abducting the humans. Knock out the aliens with smart bombs, but then you must catch the falling humans before they splat. Hosts of other alein fighters threaten you. Features long range scan, reverse. Long range shows the whole distance to travel. Keyboard positioning is sensible, which is as well, as this game does not have a joystick facility.

DEFENDAR

Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £5.95
Author: C Hinsley
The title says it all, and it turns out to be a pretty classic looking 'Defender' game with the familiar zig-zag outline landscape, waving humans, and assorted alien craft. There is the radar screen at the top as well. Control is quite good with sensible keys allowing for thrust, reverse, laser and smart bombs as well as a hyperspace facility. But there is something lacking in the feel and play. Perhaps it's the speed which seems slow compared to other versions combined with the fact that it seems quite easy to play. Inlay states user-definable keys, but there aren't any. Good, bright graphics and reasonable sound. Overall CRASH rating 63% M/C.

FIREFLASH

Producer: Abacus, 16K £5.95 (1)
Author: K Flynn
This is a very superior 'Missile Command' style game and a games designer in one — another from the specialists in games for eight-fingered players. Your base has 4 missile launch pads supplied by underground tunnels, and 2 laser bases at either end of the screen. Incoming alien missiles split into 4 small and hard to hit warheads if not destroyed quickly. You must select the launch pad required, fire the missile, guide it to its target and detonate it at the correct moment. If that's not enough, low flying alien craft bomb your installations. If you like a fast, difficult to master game, then this is for you. But many factors can be modified by the clever POKE facility which allows you to redesign the game to suit your own taste. On the reverse side is a free game called 'Destroyer'. Uses 6 control keys, no joystick option, excellent graphics, recommended. CRASH overall rating 78% M/C.

GROUND ATTACK

Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
This is similar to 'Penetrator' by Melbourne House, but is nowhere as good a program. It's the sister game to 'Orbiter'. Here you must attack the aliens in their underground caverns. Weapons are bombs and laser and there are fuel dumps for points. Thrust and decelerate and nine skill levels (different speeds of play) with the cursor keys and 9 and 0 for direction and fire, which is not the best arrangement. No joystick facility. There are better value games around of this type.

HARRIER ATTACK

Producer: Martech/Durrell, 16K £6.95
This game seemed to upset a lot of magazine reviewers because of its unstated reference to the Falklands War! Bad taste perhaps? In any event, a completely daft reason to give an excellent game a poor review. You must take off from an aircraft carrier, dodge guided missiles fired at you from an enemy ship, then fly over a heavily defended island, bombing the anti-aircraft guns, avoiding the enemy fighters and shooting them down. Keep your speed up or you'll run out of fuel before reaching the climactic bombing run on the town (Port Stanley perhaps?) Then it's back to the aircraft carrier to land. Fast responses and first rate graphics (the sun on the sea is particularly good). Five skill levels. Keys are cursor (pity) with zero to fire, nine to bomb and SPACE to eject. Joystick: Protek or AGF on the cursors. Highly recommended.



HIDDEN CITY
Producer: Bytewell, 16K £5.95
Good, smooth graphics and three different frames make this a very playable game. No bombs here, only a laser and a quickly used up fuel supply. The first part makes you fly across a plain towards a vertical cliff. Enemy missiles attack from the floor and from the cliff. If you enter the cave at the base of the cliff the second frame scrolls across, presenting a maze containing fuel dumps. On surviving this there is a 'scramble' cavern with missiles and floating mines, and then the city to destroy. Six difficulty levels, invisible barriers and time warp. Joystick: Kempston.

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHAS
Producer: Crystal, 48K £6.50 (1)
A word of warning — this game (indeed all new Crystal programs) has a special loader which makes you think it isn't loading properly. It is a classic copy of the famous arcade original and features Landers, Bombers, Mutants, Swarmers and Pods. There is an excellent radar screen, one you can really use for lining up shots, and spectacular explosion graphics. Sadly unless you own a Fuller Box, the game is totally silent. As usual with 'Defender' games, there is not much colour, but the graphics are fast and smooth. All in all probably the best version for the Spectrum yet. Rather awkward control keys; Z/X left/right and N/M up/down, A to G fire laser, H to ENTER smart bombs. Joystick: AGF, Protek, Kempston, Fuller. CRASH rating, playable and addictive, overall 70% M/C.

ORBITER
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
This is a much better game than Silversoft's 'Ground Attack' and is a good version of the classic 'Defender' of arcade fame. The animated graphics are neat and the sound amusing. Control keys are much better placed than in GA as well. Climb, dive, thrust, reverse, hyperspace, smart bombs and laser all help you protect the humanoids from the marauding alien craft. Features an excellent long range scan. No joystick facility. M/C.

PENETRATOR
Producer: Melbourne House, 48K £6.95
Probably the definitive 'scramble' game for the Spectrum. Four rings of defence surround the alien base, each with its own problems of landscale. Missiles take off continuously guided by radar units (excellent animation) which get more accurate if you fail to destroy enough of them. Special feature allows you to reprogram the game to make your own landscape and alter the enemy's defences. Highly recommended. Joystick: Kempsoft I.

REPULSAR
Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Author: Andrew Beale
This is Softek's version of missile defence and it is a close copy of the original. It's graphics are nowehre near as good as Ocean's 'Armageddon'. On the other hand it does have the extra feature of plenty of enemy planes buzzing around to destroy as well as the missiles themselves and the explosions are satisfactory. It is also faster to play than Ocean's version, but somehow less fun. One side of this tape is for the keyboard (with a dreadful layout) and the other side is for the Kempston joystick. The inlay card doesn't tell you that key M is for fire. Eight directional movement, generally okay, but not as playable as Armageddon.

ROCKET RAIDER
Producer: C-Tech, 16K £5.95
This is the poor man's 'Penetrator' and no mistake. The inlay blurb promises a long range scan — but nothing appears on it except the extremely limited landscape available to fly over. Fly is hardly the word — you only move if the thrust button is held down, and when you do that nothing else in the game moves except the lowering fuel gauge. Hitting the fuel tanks replenishes your tank and anyone can knock them off without difficulty because the missiles are easily avoided and the flying saucers don't do anything. There's no danger, no thrills and no skill needed. Keyboard positions are fine and the end of life explosion is the most imaginative graphic in the game. One or two players, poorly compiled machine code, no joystick option. The inlay card states that pressing key '2' gives you 'up' and 'reverse'. They mean 'Z' gives you reverse.

SCRAMBLE
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.50
This is an enjoyable copy of the arcade original and a flexible program as you're given a 4-option menu (1 = missiles, 2 = UFOs, 3 = Meteors, 4 = Fortress) which means you can leap from part to part as you choose, or fight your way through the correct sequence if you're a showoff. Three speeds with the graphics a bit shaky on fast. Usual lasers, bombs, fuel dumps, missiles with a neat 2-option on returning to the next life where you left off, or changing landscape each time. The meteors are too difficult to be

enjoyable, and the sound isn't amazing. No joystick option and the keys are a bit of a handful (2 = down, 4 = up, 6 = brake, 7 = thrust, 0 = laser) and all lower row are bombs. All in all fun to play and good value.

ZAXXAN

Producer: Starzone, 48K £5.50 (1)
Author: N Mardon
With a change of one letter, the game everyone has wanted to get their hands on has reached the Spectrum at last and caused a stir at the 9th ZX Microfair where it was to be seen on the Crash Micro stand for the first time. The compiled machine code graphics are surprisingly smooth, considering how much detail has to keep scrolling diagonally across the screen. The object is to take your attack fighter through the increasingly dense defences and destroy the Zaxxan fort. Features gun emplacements, fuel dumps, enemy aircraft, laser beams and walls with force fields — and of course the shadow of your fighter on the floor. Colour is well used and the sound is fairly good. Good control keys and Kempston joystick. Good value for money, addictive to play and a must for 'Zaxxon' fans. Overall CRASH rating 74% M/C.



COCKPIT GAMES

There are now a number of programs which give you a forward view through the space ship's screen, enough to make a category of their own. We've decided to call these 'cockpit' games. This section does not include any of the 'Trek' games, which often have a viewscreen simulation, as they come under their own heading.

THE BLACK PLANET

Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £5.95
Author: B G Cornhill
A mammoth game for wet Sundays. You'll need a printer or a note pad or a good memory, for the complex of instructions are on one side and the game on the other. Your task is to rid the space lanes of pirates whose home is on the Black Planet, which is invisible until you find the Key, which has been broken into seven parts and distributed on seven different planets, which each have a different arcade adventure, which each has different key instructions, which means you've got to know it all backwards! That said, it's tons of fun. The cockpit view with moving stars is very good. An instrument panel tells you where you are in space, where the star base is or the planets on which you must land. Navigating is quite difficult, but if you get it right the sight of a planet looming up is very cimenatic. You can land manually or use the auto-docking feature. Between planets you may well be attacked by the pirates who know you are after them, in which case you are into a furious dog fight. It's not a game for a few moments. Excellent value and highly recommended.

COSMOS

Producer: Abbex, 16K £5.95
The keyboard layout looks simple but is confusing to play with. The view screen shows your convoy, which you must protect. Enemy ships infest space and so do asteroids. You have two lasers with continuous fire. Movement adjusts the field of view to quite an extent but without a long range scan it's difficult to anticipate properly. The colours are fine, sound rather poor, but nevertheless, a game with good playability. Joystick: Kempston.

GALAXY ATTACK

Producer: Sunshine Books, 48K £5.95
This is a real zaparoony of a game with loads of playability, but be warned, you need to be an alien with three hands or a 15-digit Uruggian for keyboard control. The programme comes in three parts; in space as you approach the Uruggian's planet, you must destroy their waves of fighters by centering the sight cross hairs; then on the planet's surface, where your landed ship is surrounded by walkers and fighters; and then the finale attack on the orbiting mother ship. Control response is good, colour and sound excellent, and the simple response is good, colour and sound excellent, and the simple 3-dimensional aliens work well. Recommended. No joystick.

TIMEGATE

Quicksilva, 48K £6.95
Excellent moving star backgrounds, in 3D give a real space feeling to this 5-skill level game. Long range scan shows you where the enemy are and you jump through space to the correct sector. Movement control is instant and keeping the enemy in your sights is a tough task helped by a joystick (Kempston). If you're successful at clearing the entire galaxy you can land on the aliens' planet to refuel before jumping the timegate to another infested galaxy. Full damage status readouts. Highly recommended.

3D SPACE WARS

Producer: Hewson Consultants, 16K £5.95 (1)
Introducing a new race of aliens — the Seiddab (baddies spelt backwards), this game is a straightforward zap em which does not boast the complexities of a Star Trek game, but is at least to the point. The minute it starts the baddy Seiddies are there, etched atainst a realistic moving star background. Below, your instrumetns are easy to read, bar codes for fuel and speed. Twin lasers fire from the visible nose cone of your craft and are a satisfying effect. Line up the cross hairs on the enemy and fire away! The Seiddab craft are well drawn and move neatly in 3 dimensions, firing back when they want. There are refuelling points in space which you must reach in time before your power runs out. Positive movement and smooth graphics, quite good sound, joystick: AGF, Protek and Kempston. Overall CRASH rating 68%, recommended as good value. M/C.

3D SPAWN OF EVIL

Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
It's a bit of a cheat—to keep the programme in 16K the very long-winded instructions are on one side of the cassette and the game on the other, which is irritating at first. The viewscreen works well with stars defining movement, but control is exceptionally sluggish and hitting the alien swarm is a bit like trying to kill ants with a pogo stick. In the end a slow and confusing game with no joystick option.

ZZOOM

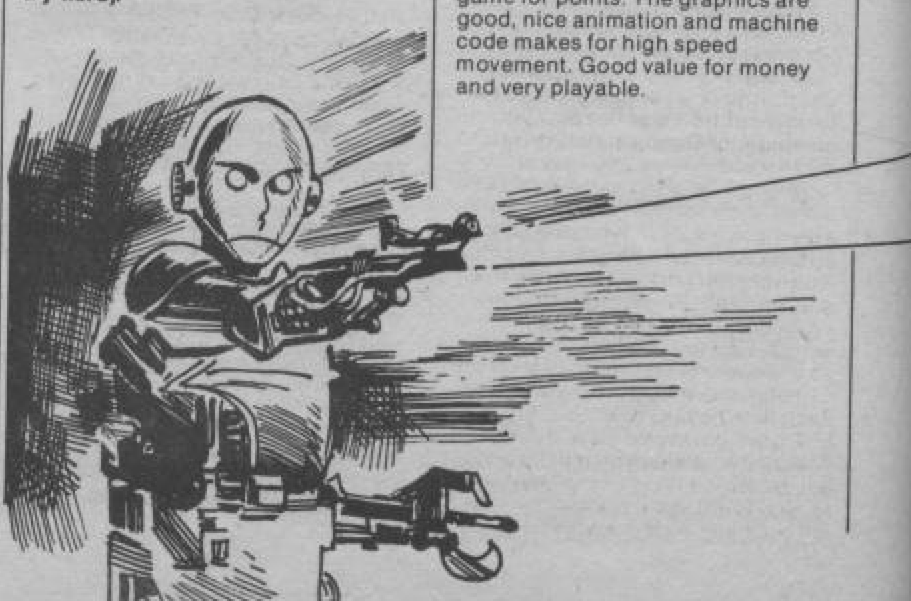
Producer: Imagine, 48K £5.50
We waited long enough—probably the most famous and wanted non-available game, probably a clever ploy on Imagine's part. But it was worth the wait. Viewscreen shows you a road over which you are flying with little humans on the horizon whom you must save from the enemy bombers. These come in waves from the left, some just content to wipe out humanity, others which turn and fire at you, wearing down your shield. If you survive two waves without getting destroyed or crashing into the ground, there's a desert infested with tanks, and the sea with submarines and ... Scrolling graphics for the titles all help to make this a very memorable game and excellent value for money. Joystick: Fuller & Kempston.

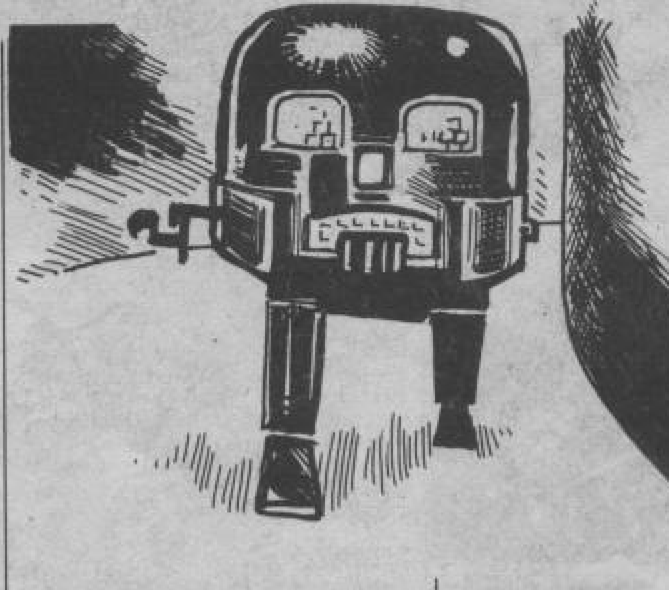
MAZE GAMES

Maze games come in all shapes and sizes (this section excludes Pacman style games however). Some of those included here might not even seem to fit the category, but on reflection you will see that in fact they are really maze games (at least, you might if you try hard).

ANDROIDS

Producer: Sunshine Books, 48K £5.95
Androids boasts a vast maze populated with homicidal robots and is Sunshine's version of 'Frenzy/Panic'. Armed with a laser (fires in the direction you're pointing) and five lives, you must find the hidden exit to the next level. Special panel's replenish your force field and laser power. It's a 'no win' game for points. The graphics are good, nice animation and machine code makes for high speed movement. Good value for money and very playable.





ANDROID 1

Producer: Vortex, 16K £5.95
What we have here is a well thought out and addictive rape of the robots 'Frenzy/Berserk' game with five skill levels and copious screens. Android 1 is a superior robot and he has to blast his way through the walls of the complex towards, what? (A reactor actually, but who cares, it's the getting there that's fun). His enemies are several types of unattractive mutants (attractive graphics) including Groupies (in groups), Wanderers (luny lonies), Skaters (slithering around and hard to hit) and Bouncers who land on your head when you're least expecting it. Joystick: Kempston. Recommended.

BEDLAM

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 16K £5.95 (1)
A very fast shoot em up game in which the maze is not a central problem, but the infestation of beautifully animated creatures are. It's supposed to be an asylum planet and you're the only sane inmate (so you think)! Equipped with your twin-firing photon bolt, it's quite a task to keep the ravening monsters at bay. They move faster and faster as they dash at you and there are also 'saucerous guards' nipping about, firing at your. The one drawback, perhaps, is that the creatures take a very predictable path towards you, but it's still all extemely fast. Could have had more variation to heighten addictivity. User-defined control keys, so AGF or Protek joysticks are usable, pretty good value for money and an overall CRASH rating of 78% M/C.

BRAIN DAMAGE

Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95 (1)
I Morrison & D Anderson
You're in charge of a tank deep inside a bored and dangerous computer which sees your presence as a bit of fun to enliven its dreary life of computing. Hot on your tail are Electron Panzers, Marauders, Centurions and Rogue Programs, each smarter than the last. The object, quite simply, is to hit one of these and promote to the next level. But it isn't as easy as it sounds. It's a measure of how fast the game can be that even with only one hit to concentrate on it remains a very difficult zap game to play. Only one blast at a time but the laser beam ricochets (beautifully). A complex array of control keys allow for 4-directional movement and turret rotation. Neat, smooth graphics, good sound, joystick: Kemptson, AGF or Protek. 3 control key options, 3 skill levels, multiple screens, pretty addictive one you get the hang. Overall CRASH rating 69% M/C.

CORRIDORS OF GENON

Producer: New Generation, 48K £5.95 (1)
A 3D Maze game which demands 'Master Code' skills and numeric sequence recognition from the player. Deceptive in that it seems very ordinary at first but rapidly becomes unstoppable. Basically you must thread your way through the concentric ciruclar maze to find the central control room for the evil computer of Genon and destroy it. Doors cut the corridors into segments and connect between adjacent corridors. These are opened and shut by the computer and you can open them by punching in the correct code (each set of doors has its own numeric sequence). With your ESP at high level the screen displays the next door's code, but there's a nasty monster called Bogul chasing you. Each time he bogulises you, your ESP goes down and more doors have blanks which you must work out before the door opens or shuts for you. The ingenious touch lies in the excellent sound track of Bogul's thudding footsteps as he chases up behind you — turn around and you'll see him. Neat, solid graphics and unusually playable. Cursor keys for movement in conjunction with 9 keys (used with an overlay) for code breaking. Joystick: Kempston, AGF or Protek. Overall CRASH rating 72%, excellent value for money if you enjoy a bit of figuring. M/C.

CRAZY BALLOONS

Producer: A&F, 16K £5.75
A simple maze made up from crosses is only just big enough to let your waggling balloon through in places. Elsewhere you must use precision and timing to squeeze through without touching the sides. Extra points for using the narrowest passages. Perhaps too simplistic for most, but still not as easy as it first looks. There is a time limit.

CYBERTANKS

Producer: Star Dreams, 16K £5.95 (1)
Here the maze actually represents the streets and buildings of a city. You're in command of a tank, surrounded by the cybertanks which you must shoot out of existence before they get you. You can blast your way through the maze walls to get at your enemy. If you clear the first screen the second sheet has mines littered around which destroy anything that touches them. All in all it becomes very repetitive and our reviewers thought it reasonable but only average fun to play. The graphics are quite small, although nicely designed and move smoothly enough — the title card is brilliant. Two sets of control keys, well placed, joystick: Kemston. Overall CRASH rating 58% M/C.

DO DO

Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
Not at first sight a maze game, but this is one where you make your own maze for protection from the dreaded Snow Bees which infest the Arctic ice wastes where you, the last living Do Do, find yourself stranded (beat that for a scenario!) This innovative game from Blaby has charming graphics and good sound. Basically you must shunt the ice blocks around to escape the bees or crush them. If you're clever you can electrocute them against the walls. Joystick: Kempston. Recommended.

EMBASSY ASSAULT

Producer: ICL/Sinclair, 16K £4.95
As the nation's top secret agent your mission is to acquire top secret codes from the code room of a foreign embassy. Actually all you have to do in this dreary game is wend your way through a 3D maze, up and down stairs and find the room, then get out, all timed against the clock. No thrills no spills and very few frills. Each move means waiting interminably for the corridors to slowly build up. Nine levels with the simplest taking seconds.

ESCAPE

Producer: New Generation, 16K £4.95
Perhaps the most beautiful looking game yet for the Spectrum. Escape pits you against a 3D maze seen from slightly above so the horizontal pathways are obscured by the hedges. Somewhere in there is the key to the exit. As you enter a monster shoots in and homes in on you inexorably. Get the key and he speeds up. Get out and you're back with a maze and two monsters. Five levels and a 'no win' situation. It's depressing! One of the most panicky games we've seen. Joystick: Kempsoft II. Recommended.

ESCAPE-MCP

Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99
The Z80 processor bites back. Yes your Spectrum has gone berserk and you have been de-atomised. You must escape through nine levels while the MCP homes in on you and tries to destroy you. Escape-MCP features a series of simple but (as becomes clear when you play) fiendishly laid out mazes, representing the logic paths of the processor. You start top left and must first reach a key and then an exit to the next level. Slowly and inexorably the MCP sight homes in on you and the trick is to move along the paths in such a way that you leave yourself enough time to make the key and exit. Not at all easy. Cursor keys and user-defined, so almost any joystick can be used. An addictively infuriating game and excellent value.

ETX

Producer: Abbex, 16/48K £5.95
In 48K ETX speaks, though mostly what he says after the locquacious intro is 'Ouch!' ET is stranded on Earth searching for odd bits with which to construct a phonehome. The bits are hidden in numerous wells. He's pursued by a mad professor and a nasty from M15 (or 6 or something). Only 'young' Ernie is nice. The game is charming to look at but a little puzzling to play since it seems impossible to escape the wretched professor. Program contained on both sides of the cassette. Joystick: Kempston.

FRENZY

Producer: Quicksilva, 16K £4.95
Almost every software house has its version of the arcade favourite, 'Berserk', which pits you against evil robots in a complex of simple mazes, representing the different rooms of some alien HQ. Life in these places must be hell because all the walls are electrified, killing you and the poor old robots. Quicksilva's version is very good of its type, with simple but smooth graphics. You lose a life if you collide with wall, robot or exploding missile. Avoiding the missiles can be done by leaping through an exit into another room, but as you do hordes more robots appear. The keyboard positions are rather odd, direction and fire being controlled by keys 6-0 which makes it difficult to use a joystick. Moderately addictive but not bad for the price.

LAST SUNSET FOR LATTICA

Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50
Arcade seem to specialise in obscure titles. Lattica is a complex maze with over 100 locations and three levels populated witn androids. The walls are electrified so you must avoid them or lose one of your four lives. The aim is to discover the location of a bomb which will destroy the entire planet when it explodes, and defuse it, murdering the androids on your way. The graphics are very good and richly coloured (you're a sort of 'Horace'-like creature). Joystick: Kempston/AGF or Protek and cursor keys. Eight directional movement. Good value.

LORD HARRY & LADY HARRIET

Producer: Lotus-Soft, 16K £4.95 (1)
Author: Derek Jones
The title indicates that if you want a lady hero you can load side 2 instead of side 1 for Lord Harry. The inebriated Lord is lost in his friend's ornate garden the morning after the night before. He must wander round, eating mushrooms to keep alive, whilst trying to find the secret exit. There are four interlinked gardens all full of puddles and trees in addition to mushrooms. The trees bar his way, the puddles lose a life — and to make matters worse there are two guard dogs chasing around after him. In one of the gardens there is a poisonous mushroom which, if Lord Harry eats it, is the end of him unless he finds the exit within 99 seconds. Reasonably well laid out control keys, attractive use of colour, but perhaps more aimed at the younger player rather than the arcade freak. Joystick: Kempston. Good value for money, overall CRASH rating 63% M/C.

MAZE DEATH RACE

Producer: PSS, 48K £4.95
You're in your car, lost in this endless maze, avoiding the hazards like rock falls, ice, oil slicks and the maniacs in their evil cars. Collect the flags for points and watch out for fuel dumps — the thirsty car needs them frequently. Control is fast and positive, good graphics and scrolling from screen to screen is effective. A good, fast game. Unfortunately you can't alter between the three skill levels once selected, and the instructions don't tell you that it's the cursor keys which operate. No Joystick option but it will work with AGF or Protek. Machine code, moderately addictive.

MAZIACS

Producer: DK Tronics, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Don Priestley
This pure find-your-way-through-a-maze-and-escape game is among the best ever from DK. Simple in concept, its playability lies in the lovely graphics and its speed of play. The aim is to enter the maze and discover the gold, which will be at least 200 moves away. Embedded in the walls are many useful items like food and swords. Keep your strength up by eating and use the swords against the dreaded Maziacs. There are prisoners also embedded in the maze walls and they will tell you the shortest route to the gold by marking the path in yellow. This only lasts for a few seconds however. The swords only last for one attack, and without one an awful Maziac will surely kill you off. Once you've found the gold your problems really start as you can't carry both gold and a sword, so it makes sense to kill as many Maziacs as you can on



the way in. The playing area shows one fiftieth of the total maze, but the VIEW facility shows you a twelfth. Excellent graphics and animation with plenty of detail. User-defined control keys, joystick: Kempston and cursor joysticks via user-define. 4 skill levels, randomly generated maze each game. CRASH rating: highly recommended, overall 82% M/C.

PLUGGIT

Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
Author: Rob Jones
The hero, Percy, is a little IC chip who has become unplugged from his socket. You must guide him through the maze of circuitry inside 'Uncle Clive's' computer and plug him in again. There are two keys to find which, when used in the correct door, will unlock them, but they must be done in the right order. The maze is full of resistors, diodes and capacitors which are chasing Percy, and his energy, which starts at 1200 units, runs down very quickly. To add to his problems, the walls of the maze are electrified. The only weapon is an energy beam which fires in the direction of movement. Only a small part of the total playing area is visible on screen. Good graphics and smooth compiled movement. Auto start and cursor contgrol keys are a slight drawback. CRASH rating: a worthy maze game if not quite up to Blaby's addictive standards. Overall 63% compiled M/C.

QUETZALCOATL

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Gareth Briggs
Quetz is one of four Aztec Gods you'll meet in this 3D maze which represents the interior of an Aztec temple with four floors. Quetz is the nicest and provides glass beads for you to collect and gives you a map of the floors when you bump into him. The map disintegrates with use, so use it sparingly. The other gods all present different problems to overcome on their particular floors. The floors are connected by shafts, mostly black and a few blue ones. If you use a black shaft, it destroys the beads you have collected. The longer you take to find a blue shaft the more black ones will appear. Should you find the exit safely, then the beads you have found can be used to barter with the natives for your life. It is a playbale game, with quite good 3D graphics and 6 skill levels, but not much sense of real danger. Average, CRASH rating 56% M/C.

RAIDER OF THE CURSED MINE

Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50
This is only a maze game in a very general sense. The game was recently upgraded to have 30 levels to play through. Each level shows a cross section through a mine with several floors visible and three lifts. Your miner (nice animation) must walk through the mine, using the lifts, and collect all the diamonds littered about whilst avoiding the spiders, ghost and boulder-throwing troll. When all the gems have been collected a lamp appears at bottom left which must be collected before progressing to the next level. Not a fast game, and at first it doesn't seem addictive either, but the ease with which you progress is matched by the ease with which you seem to lose lives. Getting to the 30th level rewards you with a picture of the surface. Nice graphics and sound, the clever player lines up all his lifts first.

ROBBER

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Keith Mitchell
This is a 3-part game. In the first section you must cross a room to 2 cupboards and collect a doorkey and a stethoscope. A guard moves about with a torch and you are caught if you appear in his beam. There is also a safe key hidden in the room. Getting through this dumps you onto a collapsing bridge with spikes beneath. The third part is a maze where you must swim under water, avoiding fish and get out before your oxygen runs out, then cross an invisible maze avoiding man-eating birds, get through narrow passages avoiding the bouncing balls, and lastly a maze which disappears as soon as you've seen it. Sounds exciting but it isn't. This is a good sketch for a much better game. The inlay instructions are incorrect and the game has a tendency to freeze terminally at odd times. Primitive graphics and unresponsive control don't help. Poor. CRASH rating overall 48%. Compiled M/C.

ROBON

Producer: Softex, 16K £5.95
Author: Andrew Beale
This 'Frenzy/Berserk' game, unlike most of Softek's other programs, is not very good. At the slowest of the nine skill levels it's a bit boring, and at the fastest it's quite meaningless. The usual format is followed; electrified walls, robots, unkillable 'Raboks' which leave exploding mines behind. Four directional movement with unanimated characters. 100% machine code, three lives, hi-score, no joystick option. Oddly the control keys are cursor with nine to fire, so you could use AGF or Protek joysticks for the movement but not for firing.

ROBOTICS

Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
The name was changed from 'Frenzy' to avoid confusion with Quicksilva's game of the same name. As usual the walls are electrified. But the graphics are much better than anyone else's version, bigger and better animated. Only the robots' heads are vulnerable, and their floating leader is invulnerable. You can only escape him by jumping into another sector. The game speeds up as you clear sectors, and more robot patrols appear. Move and fire in eight directions. Joystick: Kempston. Good value.

ROBOT PANIC

Producer: Soft Mill, 16K
You're the robot sent into the space ship hold to kill off the escaped nasties. A time limit imposed by the cargo hold walls moving in to crush you does not give this game enough impetus to be exciting. The graphics are limited and not smooth and the nasties remain static. Five different sets of creature. Only one life makes it irritating as you must wade through the setting up each time. Low playability. Cursor keys, so you could use AGF or Protek joysticks.

SPLAT

Producer: Incentive, 48K £5.50 (1)
Author: Ian Andrew & Ian Morgan
Put simply, Splat is dangerously addictive! The hero, called Zippy, must move round a large maze, eating clumps of grass, invisible grass, and plums, whilst avoiding the spikes, water and the edges of the maze. This would be child's play if it weren't for the fact that the maze scolls all by itself, in any direction it fancies. If Zippy gets trapped between a wall of the maze and the wall surrounding the edge, then it's SPLAT! Escape is on level 7 but with each level cleared the next becomes more difficult and the maze scolls faster. Panic sets in at a moment's notice. When you get through a screen the computer yells out 'Yippee!' Simple, effective graphics, smooth movement, user-defined control keys, joystick: Kempston, AGF and Protek. Highly recommended, overall CRASH rating 82% M/C.

STYX

Producer: Bug-Byte, 16K
You must move your man through three horizontal areas; top, a simple maze infested with spiders to get to a door into the middle section, which is the river full of prahnas, and then to the beach, to pass through the lower area where the dead spirits lurk. If you make it through, the exit is guarded by a shrouded figure whose touch is death. It's a simple set up and would not be interesting if it weren't for the fact that it's not easy. The screens are always the same but with more denizens as you go along. Keyboard positions are good, the graphics neat and excellent eight directional movement. No joystick option.

TOBOR

Producer: Elfin, 48K £7.95
The title frame promises excitement, but the game doesn't deliver. Poor graphics and movement make you wonder why it needed 48K in the first place. Basically you must take on some robots in a simple outline maze. Keyboard positions are irritating and there's a poor response. No joystick option. Not really worth the very high price, and certainly not as much fun as even 'Jawz' which they did and handed over to DK Tronics.

3D MONSTER CHASE

Producer: Romik, 16K £6.99
Author: Dave Noonan
This is a 3D 'corridor' type game. The maze is on three floors and your mission is to find the missing keys and return them to the start position. Then you must find a bomb and defuse it before it detonates (against the clock). To make the task harder there are monsters moving about the maze that can be killed by one of your limited supply of grenades. To help you the monsters can be seen on a radar screen. The 3D graphic representation is very good and easy to visualise. The keyboard positions are well thought out and a joystick may be used. The monsters appear very suddenly in front of you for a second before you lose your life — like a scene from Alien! Five skill levels and an absorbing game. Good value for money.

3D MAZE OF GOLD

Producer: Gilsoft, 16K £5.95
Author: T Gilberts
This is a maze without monsters or robots. The maze is seen from eye level in 3D blocks, so it's a game of orientation and geography. The aim is to wander the maze, collecting gold bars which lie on the floor and get to the level's exit quickly before the value of gold you are carrying falls to zero! This is no easy task, a pencil and pad would help. There are ten levels of play from 0 (impossible) down to 9 (village idiots). I tried village idiots — and believe me, they have to be university graduates anyway! To help, for levels 4-9 you can select an overhead plan view whenever you want which shows you your position and heading, the exit and positions of all gold bars left to collect. It doesn't show you the walls of the maze — that would be too easy. When you return to the maze itself a display tells you the value of the gold you have collected (falling all the while of course), moves made so far, level of play and a compass with a moving north. For the contemplative, an excellent game with loads of playabilty. Cursor keys, joystick: AGF or Protek.

TUTANKHAMUN

Producer: Micromania, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Dominic Wood
Tut was an Egyptian despot who stored his worldly goods in a large tomb. Your job as archaeologist or grave robber, is to wander the five tombs and collect as much treasure as you can. You may start at tomb 1 or at a later stage if you wish. The maze scrolls left and right and vertical tunnels wrap around top to bottom. What makes this game difficult is the ferocious speed of the beasts that inhabit the tombs. Monsters include mummies, cobras, spiders and skulls. You are provided with a continuous firing laser, but it only works horizontally, which makes you vulnerable in the vertical tunnels. There is also a smart bomb to be used once per tomb or life, but its effects are very short-lived indeed. At the top is a map of the entire complex. Doors block the tombs from each other. Lively graphics, speed and good key positions all combine to make this very playable and addictive. Overall CRASH rating 72% M/C — a maze/zap game with a different feel.





VOLCANIC PLANET

Producer: Thorn EMI, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Nick Burroughs
It is your task to destroy the evil race of Zerans, who live on a volcanic planet. To do this you must make your way through an underground complex to the depths of the city and place a bomb on the volcanic plug and then make your escape before it goes off. 5 skill levels provide a city with between 3 and 15 floors. The screen only shows a tiny part of the whole with a small map of the entire floor you are on. Floors are connected by lifts which only travel between 2 floors. The Zerans are equipped iwth blasters and huge crushing slaves. Dotted about are tool repair kits and spare oxygen bottles, but the Zerans will take them first if you're not quick. Your armour and life support is eroded by Zeran attack. The graphics are very good, especially the wonderful blaster effect, and all in all this is an excellent maze game with plenty of potential. Lots of control keys, joystick Sinclair and Kempston. One drawback — poor sound. Apart from that, a very good game, overall CRASH rating 69% M/C.

THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN

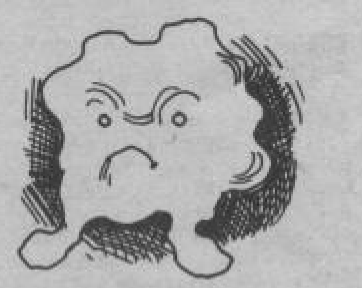
Producer: Puffin Books, 48K £6.95 (1)
Author: N Mottershead & S Brattel
Put together by Crystal for Puffin, this is a simpler and more playable version of Hall of the Things, and adapted from a successful book. You must enter the labyrinth beneath the crags of Firetop Mountain to get the Warlock's treasure. This is guarded by Orcs, Spiders, Slime Mould and other horrors. Your weapons are a sword and a bow. To get to the treasure you must collect 15 keys. Most doors open and shut at command and the maze scrolls smoothly as you move. As in HOTT there are a lot of control keys — 18 in all, and practice is essential to stay alive. Good looking monsters, which home in on you as soon as they spot you, loads of speed in the fights, and for the price you get a copy of the book as well. Puffin have a winner with this one. Overall CRASH rating 73% M/C.

THE WIZARD'S WARRIORS

Producer: Abersoft, 48K £4.95
This is a robot/maze game, but a considerable improvement on the 'Berserk' type. The complex is haunted by robots which fire away blindly at anything, and which you must destroy. The earlier ones are pretty dumb, but later additions get harder to hit and are better at hitting you; some are even invisible (use the radar to spot them). Machine code. Joystick: Kempston. Addictive and good value.

GHOST GOBBLING

Since its introduction Pacman has probably been the most enduring of the arcade games. For Spectrum software companies it has also been the most imitated, with just about every producer having a go. As a result there are numerous versions available with very little to distinguish one from the other. Some of them will be the subject of a CRASH Comparison in the near future. Meanwhile we list them here very briefly, only making points where there is any point (if you see what I mean). For anyone who has never seen a pacman type game (can there be anyone?) you are presented with a simple maze, often connected left to right by a wrap-around tunnel, the passageways of which are littered with regular dots. Your gobbler must wend his way round eating up every dot like a good boy before he can progress to the next level of difficulty. To make life hell there are several ghosts which zoom around trying to gobble your gobbler. Four power pills per level may be eaten which then allow you to gobble ghosts for a short while. It's all terribly enthralling and a joystick can be useful.



EGG FARM

Producer: Lasersound, 16K £5.50
'I'm a real mean chicken,' says the cover in this game where the dots are eggs and two enraged hens are after you for eating them. The hens's advantage is that they can move diagonally when you can't, so if you delay one nanosecond after the start you've had it. However, once you get the hang of it the hens are so easy to outwit that the game becomes boring and silly.

GHOST HUNT

Producer: PSS, 16K £4.95
Good, classic version with three skill levels and clear graphics. A pity, though, that the makers don't tell you which keys to use either on the inlay or the screen. In fact they are the cursor keys — not the best arrangement for fingers but useful because you can use a Protek or AGF joystick.

GHOST'S REVENGE

Producer: Micromania, 16K £5.95
Unfairly written off by a review in a well known magazine, this program rates as one of the most flexible and playable of its kind. Large, bright graphics with the usual features and a smooth action. Only four ghosts, but at the higher skill levels they are frighteningly intelligent at getting you. 10 skill levels, tunnel, and an unusual feature in the invisible maze mode, which starts off easily enough with all the dots outlining the paths, but becomes difficult as you eat the dots. Good sound too, and all round good value. Overall CRASH rating 72%. 100% M/C.

GNASHER

Producer: R & R, 16K £4.95
Author: Jonathan Nixon
The maze in R & R's version is simpler than many but the reward is exceptionally clear and detailed graphics with very smooth movement. Various fruit appear to be eaten for extra points and this version doesn't suffer with virtually invisible edible ghosts. Power pills, tunnel and increasingly fast screens. Very positive keyboard action, joystick option: Kempston but most importantly user-defined keys if you don't like the cursors. One of the best gobblers around.

GOBBLE A GHOST

Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
All the usual features with machine code smooth graphics. No joystick option.

GOBBLEMAN

Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Another standard version, pity though that Artic couldn't have made the ghosts a little slower after eating a power pill since it makes them impossible to catch.

GULPMAN

Producer: Campbell Systems, 16K £4.95
This is slightly different in that there's only one ghost to chase you but the more dots you eat, the faster he gets. Five screens, nine speeds, no pills or tunnels, but pretty addictive.

HAUNTED HEDGES

Producer: Micromega, 16K £6.95
Author: Derek Brewster
Derek Brewster is Neptune Computing, but this 3D pacman is marketed by Micromega. The price probably reflects the fact the 3D in a title or game sells better than mere two dimensions. In effect, though, this is very much the ordinary ghost game with a running figure instead of the usual toothy orange.

HUNGRY HORACE

Producer: Psion, 16K £5.95
Many critics regard this as the definitive pacman game for the Spectrum, and of course Horace has begat a number of sequels in other categories. Highly attractive graphics and smoothly animated make it a joy to play. There are several mazes of increasing complexity to get through. No power pills — just wits. Highly recommended.

MAZECHASE

Producer: Hewson, 16K £4.95
Considering the quality of most Hewson programmes, this one is a complete mystery. Put it down to history. It's probably the simplest one available, with matchstick figures, white ghosts and some fruit as power pills. Four screens, cursor keys so works with AGF or Protec joysticks. Not very good.

MAZEMAN

Producer: Abersoft, 16K £4.95
Abersoft's maze is a bit more complex than most and the graphics are clear and bright.

MONSTER MUNCHER

Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
Ocean's graphics are always pleasing, and this version works as well as any other.

MUNCHER

Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
A good classic version, but the inlay card is all over the place telling us N = down, when it's M, and 5 starts a new game when it's S. In fact the keys used are quite sensible. No joystick option.



PLATFORM GAMES

'Oh no, it wasn't the aeroplanes – it was Beauty killed the Beast,' says the man at the end of the film King Kong. As television is said to have killed off the cinema, arcade games are said to be killing off television, but good ideas cross all the barriers, so it's no surprise to see the famous Ape still going strong in the arcades.

Kong games are perhaps the best known of the platform games, but there are quite a few other types, all characterised by the need to climb ever higher either by jumping or climbing ladders and usually both. As with most arcade games joysticks are usually a help to higher scores.

BARMY BURGERS

Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
Author: G Capewell
Sound and graphics are strong points of Blaby games and this maddening sesame seed bun of a game is no exception from its delightful titlecard onwards. You're presented with four platforms with the various elements of three hamburgers suspended from them. The task is to walk your chef over the ingredients which drops them level by level until they make up complete burgers; burger, cheese, lettuce and top half of the bun in that order. This would all be very simple were it not for the fried egg and two sausages which dog your footsteps. A blast of pepper will hold them up but there are only five blasts per life. The chef can move up and down the platforms using the ladders, but so can the pursuers. Each screen provides you with more eggs and sausages to chase. Three lives with points scored by releasing segments of the ingredients or squashing eggs and sausages between the falling burger bits. Addictive. Joystick: AGF or Protek and Kempston. Recommended.



BONKERS

Producer: Procom, 16K £5.50 (1)
Author: David James
A bunch of five earthlings are trapped on a space station by loads of aliens. You must get them safely down through the floors to five airlocks at the bottom. At first you have only one monster to contend with, but as you go along, more and more appear. Each floor has a moving 'lift' through which you descend. The animation and detail are very good and the game gets extremely difficult. Our reviewers thought this was a winner. Cursor keys or E,S,D,X (which is a silly arrangement). Joystick: Kempston, Fuller, AGF & Protek. 5 lives, well over 10 screens, good sound. CRASH rating: 78% M/C.

BUGABOO (THE FLEA)

Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95 (1)
Author: Indescomp
One of the most colourful and maddeningly addictive games of the pre-Christmas period, 'Bugaboo' boasts feature film titles and an engaging hero in the flea. Bugaboo has fallen into a deep gorge and must hop his way out, by leaping from ledge to ledge. The strength of leap is determined by releasing the key when the bar indicator at the bottom of the screen reaches the desired level. As it moves extremely fast, this is not an easy task. The gorge is swamped with vegetation which gets in the way, and there's an appalling yellow dragon which pops up and eats Bugaboo. 2 keys control left/right hops and the cursors scroll the screen. Excellent, colourful graphics with very smooth movement, good sound and highly recommended. No joystick option. CRASH rating: addictive qualities 90%, overall 91% M/C.

DIGGER DAN

Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
Digger Dan is armed only with a spade. He must dig holes in the four levels of platforms, using the ladders to get up and down. Four monsters chase him around, hopefully upending in the holes, which he promptly fills in to kill them. There are safe spots at the end of each platform but he can't linger because the oxygen's running out. An oxygen bottle appears from time to time but getting at it can be difficult. If the screen is cleared it returns with fresh and slightly more clever beasts. Only one screen and speed, but the graphics are smooth and nicely animated. Dan can jump down through the holes too, useful in a tight spot. The control key positions are sensible, but with six of them, a bit of a handful. Reasonable value for money.

GODZILLA & THE MARTIANS

Producer: Temptation, 16K £5.95
Author: Neil Streeter
Despite the title this is a Kong game — the only one in 16K for the Spectrum, but sadly it shows. The animation is very poor and limited,the characters are small and the movemnt is jerky and ill-defined. There is a falling oxygen level for a time limit, but it appears to reach zero and stay there without ending the game. Control keys are badly placed with 1/zero for jump left/right, 5/8 walk left/right and 7 for up. Another irritation is that there is only one life and one skill level. Joystick: none. CRASH rating: 35%

GOTCHA!

Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50 (1)
You're Ernie, an old lag just broken out of prison. In the first screen you must escape from the prison compound, avoiding the guards and their torches, get through the opening and closing gates and into a life of crime in the second screen. This is a nightmare of platforms, littered with Hitachi stereos and other valuable goodies to be collected, but the screen is dissected vertically by 6 gates which ride up and down the screen, all out of time with each other. Once committed, Ernie cannot stop until he gets to the other side and climbs up a level. There's also a mean copper on the loose who, if he catches Ernie, sends him to the bottom of the screen after beating him up! Timing is the essence in this very difficult and attractive looking game. Not one for beginners! Sensible control keys, joystick: Kempston, reasonably smooth compiled machine code. CRASH rating: overall 77% recommended.

HOME RUNNER

Producer: Britannia, 48K £5.95
This is a lively game with attractive graphics and is really a variation on the Jumping Jack theme. Here the platforms are more solid looking and the holes open and close at random. Unlike Jumping Jack you can use the hold key to make your man hover over the holes. The various monsters jump down through the holes which makes timing an important feature of the game. On level three the Green Grinner appears, bouncing up and down, happily oblivious of the platforms or holes. Britannia is a relatively new company, so it's nice to be able to say that both their games (Stopming Stan in this section is the other) are very playable and good value.

JUMPING JACK

Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
Author: Albert Ball
At first sight the extremely simple graphics might be a disappointment —but this is a classic game. Jack's stick figure is beautifully animated. The platforms are merely thin black lines. At first there are only two holes, one moving down level by level, and one moving up similarly. Each successful jump creates another hole, so it gets frustratingly difficult to progress. Should Jack fall down a hole he lies stunned, if he falls through two he's out for even longer. If he falls all the way to the bottom he loses a life. Getting right to the top results in a line from a poem — you have to collect the rest of the lines, but the poem isn't the real reward in this game — it's playing the game. Subsequent levels add more monsters which must be avoided by using the wrap around screen. By the time you're dealing with twenty holes and six monsters it's a nut house. Quite simply one of the most addictive games around and excellent value for money. Joystick: Fuller, Kempston.

KILLER KONG

Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
This is a very fine version with excellent graphics and plenty of screen variation. The detail is first class as well with neat animation. Mario's girlfriend shouting for help but rewarding the succesful climb with big kisses. Features lifts, trampolines, long narrow passages requiring expert timing to get through, a fairly butch looking Kong and probably the best sound on any program available. Joystick: Kempston or AGF & Protek. Recommended.

KONG

Producer: Ocean, 48K £5.90
Author: Paul Owens
Ocean's Kong is a pleasing version too, with chunky graphics starting with Kong stomping up the screen and thumping the girders into position. The animation is good with fast and positive movement. Here, the objects tend to come tumbling down the ladders, whereas in the Blaby version the platforms are more broken up and barrels etc drop off the ends of the platforms. So it's a little unfair to make lining up the man on the ladders such a critical business. Features a hammer which can knock out a few barrels. Keyboard positions are okay. Joystick: Kempston. Generally good value, but did we detect a tendency for the barrels to anticipate death? Five screens.

MANIC MINER

Producer: Bug-Byte, 48K £5.95
This is the best platform game around, in fact it's probably the best arcade game for the Spectrum. From the moment the full colour title blasts onto the screen accompanied by what sounds like the massed Coldstream Guards band, it's all wonderful. An amazing demo mode takes you through endless levels to whet the appetite. Control keys are simple; left/right/jump, and it seems incredible that Bug-Byte managed to pack so much animated detail into one 48K program. You must take Willie the Miner through the warrens of a long abandoned robot-worked mine beneath Surbiton, collecting keys at each level in order to proceed to the next. Jumping up the platforms is easy — avoiding the slime, poisonous pansies and manic mining robots is not. Some platforms collapse when you tread on them, but forward planning let's you use these on your way back down to the portal. Excellent quality all round and top notch value. Highly recommended.

MONSTERS IN HELL

Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Author: Martin Lewis
Above the flickering fires of hell are six platforms connected by eight ladders. Your man has a hammer with which he can knock holes in the platforms for monsters to fall through, or he can bang them on the head with it. All the while the power drain is enormous — visiting the flickering crosses replenishes it, but they move once used, so you can't just hammer holes and isolate yourself from the monsters. Kill off 25 of the lesser idiots and the cleverer ghouls appear; ten of those despatched and the Mad Monk's clones appear. Ghouls must fall three levels to die, clones four, but the next lot can only die in the fires of hell itself. While the graphics are attractive, the lack of screen changes could make the game boring to play after a while and it's really a no-win game. Nine lives to help, machine code, no joystick option.

MORRIS MEETS THE BIKERS

Producer: Automata, 16K £6.00 (1)
Author: S Curtis
Automata aren't noted for bringing out arcade games, but true to the company's mad hatter image, Morris is loopy and original. It's also a very good arcade game. Morris (a car) is shut in a nightmarish concrete multi-storey car park with several ramps connected by two creaky lifts. The car park is full of hazards like tyre clamps, tin tacks, parking fees and carbon monoxide fumes, all of which make Morris feel very sick. Worst of all are the kamikaze bikers of the title, who roar around the place. Morris has a weapon — a magic horn. You must make him travel the car park to collect enough coins to be able to get through the exit barrier. Unpaid-for exits result in sudden death. Should you succeed there are eight more car parks, each worse than the other. A dubious bonus is the hit single 'Leader of the Pac' on the reverse side of the tape by Lady Sinclive and Pimen. User-defined control keys, joystick: Kempston or AGF & Protek via user-defined cursors. A good game with an overall CRASH rating of 74%.

PANIC

Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
Panic is a standard digger-filler game, where you rove several floors with your spade trying to clean up the monsters by digging holes for them to fall into. A neat touch is that you must reach them quickly and batter them to death or they change colour and get out of the hole, which

means you must mash em up through two holes before they die. The going gets tougher as you progress. Not bad and reasonably addictive.

STOMPING STAN
Producer: Britannia, 48K £5.95
This is a three-part game, which sarts off with moving platforms through which you must jump up when a hole appears above you, avoiding the monsters, some of whom are on their way down. When you reach the top platform collect the four keys to reach the next screen. This is a static maze populated by robots who are out to get you the moment you enter. Collect another four keys, which promptly takes you a more complex platform game with bigger monsters and holes that open and close when you're not expecting them too. Good graphics, positive controls and fun to play with a fairly high addiction rating. Joystick: Kempston.

SUPER DIGGER
Producer: Abacus, 16K £5.95
Author: Andrew Blackburn
As its name suggests, this is a Panic style dig-dug game, where you roam the platforms with your pick-axe, digging holes for the monsters to fall in. When they do, you dash up and bonk them on the head, killing them. If you fail to reach them in time they get out. Ladders connect the various levels and as well as going up you can jump the monsters. Our reviewers thought it was too simple a version to interest experts, especially as the 5 screens prôvide little increase in difficulty and there are only three monsters to contend with, but it is attractively ainmated and probably very good for younger players. Coming from Abacus, its simplicity is surprising as their games are usually fiendishly hard to play. Cursor keys, joystick: AGF or Protek, average sound, but good value with a free game on the reverse. CRASH rating 62% M/C.

CREEPIE-CRAWLIES

There are two types of game which come under this heading, both very similar in appearance. The first is the sort where you are pitted against a centipede creature which descends from the top of the screen by moving left and right, line by line through a forest of mushrooms – the other is the sort where you are the centipede creature, travelling through a fenced garden, eating snails and whatnot else, whilst avoiding flowers, fences etc. Both types tend to be very fast and scores are improved with a joystick. Most versions are very similar – so it's a question of personal choice ...

BOZY BOA
Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
Author:
Guide Bozy round the garden, eating snails, beetles and ladybirds, at the same time avoiding the fence, flowers and your own lengthening body. Each time you eat a beetle another segment is added to you and another flower appears. Eat all ten beetles and you enter another garden with a higher fence at a higher speed. Five levels, the fastest being quite demented. Automatic joystick selection if connected — Kempston. A nice touch is the tune, 'In An English Country Garden,' set off by bright and reasonably smooth graphics. Probably a limited appeal overall.

CATERPILLA
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
Like Quicksilva, Ocean are moving on to better games than the basic



arcade copies, however, their standard creepie has all the usual features and plays perfectly well.

CATERPILLAR
Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
CDS have produced a pretty classic version of the centipede game, with a fast moving caterpillar which reverses direction on contact with screen edge or mushroom, an irritating spider, an innovative mushroom-laying flea, and a poisonous scorpion which turns mushrooms red. If the caterpillar hits a red fungus, a segment drops off like a bomb. The man can move left/right and up/down (within four lines). Cursor keys so Protek, AGF joystick can be used. Lack of skill levels results in a limited playing appeal. Average value. Machine Code.

CENTIPEDE
Producer: DJ Tronics, 16K £4.95
This is another pretty standard version, complete with spider, but for its price it's probably better value than Caterpillar.

CENTROPODS
Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99
Author: J F Cain
With its simple but charming graphics and machine code speed, Rabbit's Centropods is probably the best of the lot. There's a spider, a flea and a bottom line snail to avoid. The control keys are the most sensible I've come across — 0 for left, P for right and O/P together for up. You sail sedately down automatically. A fires. Continuous sound effects add to the thrills. If you clear the screen the wretched creature gets longer and faster. No need for a joystick here, excellent value.

CREEPY CRAWLER
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
Author: S Townsend
This is a very ordinary 'Centipede' game, surprising that anyone would be offering something like this today. Apart from the creepy itself (and the mushrooms of course) there is only a spider and a simple flea to worry about. The colours are bright and the graphics smooth, sound continuous and the game very fast to play. But poor control keys (3/4/8/9) and the fact that it's 12 months out of date are against it. Also the inlay states that there are user-definable keys — there aren't. Overall CRASH rating (for its speed mostly) 58%. Joystick option: Mikrogen.

CYBER RATS
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
Author: I Hayward
Despite its title this is a centipede game. Instead of one fragmenting creature, you are presented with individual rats which work their way down from the top of the screen and there are even faster purple ones. They hide behind clumps of grass, and once they reach the lower levels of the screen you are hard put to avoid them. Cursor keys for movement and limited upward motion, no instruction on inlay card for firing (it's 0), but Kempston, Protek or AGF joystick option. Because the game is simpler in layout than most centipede games, it is also much faster. One or two players. Average value for money.

GALACTIC WARRIORS
Producer: Abacus, 16K £5.95 (1)
Author: Michael Lee
Difficult to decide whether this should be under the Galaxian heading or the one we've put it under, but at the end of the day Galactic Warriors is more of a 'Centipede' game than a 'Galaxian'. Your mission is to save Earth by manning the last missile base. An alien mother ship (can be shot if you're quick) spews out a row of smaller attack craft which then descend the screen in zig zag lines just like a centipede. Aboutkyour head the sky is littered with small asteroids. When the train of alien craft hit one, they reverse direction, and the line is split into segments whenver you hit one of their number. The asteroids can be blasted out of the way by your laser — magenta



ones take 2 shots, red ones only one. When hit, alien craft turn into magneta debris. As they traverse left and right, the aliens drop bombs on you in a continuous shower. Apart from dodging them, there is a force field which is effective against contact with aliens and missiles, but blows you up if you use your laser. Excellent 'attract mode', good keyboard positons, joystick: none. Overall CRASH rating 67% M/C.

GRIDRUNNER
Producer: Quicsilva, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Jeff Minter/Salamander
This is not a TRON syle grid game as the title suggests but actually a 'Centipede' with 'Grid' pretensions. Looking a bit like a series of blips on an oscilloscope the blue centipede dashes left and right down the screen following the red grid. To the left of the grid an alien ship fires objects into the grid which impede the centipede, causing it to reverse direction. At the base of the grid, another alien craft moves from left to right firing a laser blast upwards, causing the creature to split into the traditional segments if hit. You're just inside the grid, able to move along the base and upwards for a few lines. Your laser too destroys segments of the centipede, but watch our for the laser craft and the side ship, and avoid contact with the centipede. It's designed to be fast and addictive, but none of our reviewers found it very inspiring. I/P left/right and zero to fire. Joystick: AGF or Protek. Small graphics, average sound and an overall CRASH rating of only 47% M/C

MEGAPEDE
Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95
Author: Andrew Beole
Softek's version of the noble creepy-crawlie game is just about as good as any. Here the scorpion tends to drop fleas rather as though they were bombs, which makes an interesting variation. Machine Code, nice graphics, nine skill levels. Good.

MILLIMON
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Author: D Campbell & G Porter
Millimon is a 'Centipede' game with the usual features, a descending centipede, darting spider and snails (snails?). Artic have chosen to place the status report down the left of the screen rather than at the top or bottom, which makes the playing area unusually square. The graphics are average, not at all smooth and the game is slow and pretty easy to play on the lower levels. 6/7/8/9 and zero make for poor control keys. 3 skill levels, 3 lives, 1 or 2 player games. No joystick option. There are better versions available. Overall CRASH rating 55% M/C

SLIPPERY SID
Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95
Author: S Godwin
Slippery Sid is a large snake in a garden whose task in life is to eat frogs. Every time he does so a poisonous toad appears which he can't eat until having consumed a magic mushroom. Death occurs instantly if he touches the brick walls or himself. Silversoft have given enough elements to this fast game to make it quite addictive. The keyboard positions, however, are a bit daft, but you can use a Kempston joystick. Five skill levels with an extra life for getting to the fourth garden. Sound could have been better, otherwise good value for money.

SNAKE
Producer: Artic, 16K £4.95
Author: P Baker
Snake is, of course, 'Snake', where you guide your pet reptile round the screen eating the files and avoiding the walls, poisonous mushrooms and his own tail. Every time he eats a fly his tail grows longer. The graphics are very lightweight with all the drawbakcs of BASIC. The sound is continuous although unimaginative, but the game does have a nice 'attract mode'. The control keys are another drawback — 6/7/8/9. Awkward to use. They seem as though intended for use with Sinclair Interface 2, but if so, it doesn't say so. May please younger kids but there are much better versions available. Overall CRASH rating 45%.

SPECTICEDE
Producer: R&R, 16K £5.50
A diet of scorpions, fleas, spiders and worms in addition to the ubiquitous centipede. Three skill levels and hi score. A well rounded version.

SPECTRAPEDE
Producer: Protek, 48K £5.95
Now everyone has had their fill of basic arcade copies, many companies are getting down to producing better games and Protek have become noted for their simulation games like Airliner, which I suspect makes them far happier. Their creepie version is pretty respectable, however. All the usual features like scorpions, worms, fleas and the inevitable multi-legged monster itself. Three skill levels and hi-score. Can, of course, be played with a Protek joystick (and therefore AGF as well).



FROGGERS

Having become fed up with decimating aliens, the arcade copiers turned to more domestic chores like squashing frogs under lorries. The game requires you to hop a frog across a busy highway, avoiding certain death under the wheels. Sit on a river bank avoiding the odd snake or two and take a chance of crossing the river on the back of turtles and logs, then leap to the safety of a frog home. No one's ever explained why frogs should drown in the river – still ... On the whole the game provides more interest, better graphics and a more addictivity than most arcade copies. Joysticks are more than useful. As with pacman games and centipede games there is usually very little between any version.

FROGGER
Producer: A&F, 48K £5.75
This company always produce charming graphics and their Frogger is no exception, as 48K would suggest. All the standard features.

FROGGER
Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99
Rabbit provide a four lane highway to cross, a barrier and a river full of logs and crocodiles. Here you may use the crocs for jumping on, but if you land too near the mouth you will lose a life. Three lives, but you must get five frogs safely across before moving to the next screen for faster traffic and more crocs. Cursor keys and user-defined, so you can get practically any joystick to work. Good value.

FROGGER/SPECMAN
Producer: C-Tech, 16K £5.50
As this has two games for the price of one, it should be good value for money, but it isn't. Sorry.

FROGRUN
Producer: Anirog, 16K £4.95
Machine code and attractive graphics and good sound. Features snakes on the bank, logs, turtles, crocodiles and lady frogs to rescue for extra points. At its price, pretty good value.

FROGGY
Producer: DJL, 16K £5.95
A highly rated version with very busy 3-lane highway, turtles that sink under your weight, crocodiles in the frog homes and five lives. There's a time limit too which can be very cruel. For exra points there's a stranded frogling to rescue. Four skill levels and seven speeds. Joystick: Kempston, or AGF and Protek on the cursor keys. Recommended.

JOGGER
Producer: Severn, 48K, £4.95
Unfortunately, none of our reviewers have seen this game yet, so we'll try and catch up with the joggers another time.

LEAPFROG
Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
This is a standard version which offers the usual hazards but adds a snake on the bank if you linger too long, and dragonflies in the frog homes for extra points. Attractive graphics but it's a bore waiting for that damned tune between each game. Uses cursor keys, so Protek and AGF joystick interfaces may be used.

ROAD FROG
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90
Ocean's version doesn't have turtles (probably went on strike) but some of the logs sink, and there are snakes on the bank. Six frogs to get safely home for a second screen and the traffic moving faster. Unlike some versions you can only go forward. No joystick option.

ROAD TOAD
Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95
Marketed by DK and made by Elfin, Road Toad is a frogger by any other name. The graphics are okay but the hazards aren't that keen, and the sound is poor. There are better and more addictive versions available.

YOMP
Producer: Virgin Games, 16K £5.95
Author: Terry Murray/Roy Poole
In the main, Virgin's first batch of games were pretty poor and madly overpriced (£7.95). Now they've brought the price down, but frankly this still isn't good value. You are supposed to 'yomp' your Paras over the highway and then get them through a minefield. There's no disguising the fact that this is a frogger game with 'mined-out' pretensions. The basic programme makes controlling movement very difficult and the way the traffic moves along the highway makes it almost unplayable. Only one moment in the repeating cycle can get your men through safely. In the minefield movement sensors mean sudden death through mistakes, but I wonder how many people will even bother getting there? Four skill levels, no joystick option.

GRID RUNNERS

Ever since the Movie *TRON*, grid games have been popular, almost a cult because they exemplify the computer game – simplicity, high speed, action on a strict grid as defined by the computer.

BLIND ALLEY
Producer: Sunshine Books, 16K £4.95
Author: Simon Lane
Blind Alley is what passed for sport in the year 3017, you are told on the inlay. In fact the game looks confusing at first, but that's because it is fast and there's no time to think. This really is a game where those with quick and sure instincts win. You must steer your ship round the grid in such a way that you block off other ships, forcing them into a blind alley where they are forced against your trail, their own trails, or the edge of the screen. Of course it usually happens the other way round ... You start off against two ships, then four, then 6 and so on. It gets very hard! Workd with Kempston joystick. Avoid hitting reverse of the direction in which you're travelling — it's instant death. Recommended.

CRUISING ON BROADWAY
Producer: Sunshine Books, 16K £4.95
Author: Jeff Naylor
The graphics don't portray the famous streets around Times Square in New York as the title suggests, they could be any streets that the grid represents. You're in your car when a cop pulls in behind, you decide to make a getaway. If he catches you then the game starts from scratch. You score points by the length of line travelled before capture. Your only weapon is the facility to create a temporary block in the road and hold up the cop. Clear the frame and more chasers join in or you get a more complex grid to traverse. A simple, effective and highly addictive no win game. Joystick: Kempston (and Softlink II).

GRIDRUN
Producer: Arcade, 48K £5.50
Robot security picks up your trail just when you thought you had given them the slip (trust robots to be bloody minded). Now they're catching up with you — and no one's ever survived the grid before. Actually the grid resembles a pac man type maze in this fast game. You drive around the rectangular, concentric rings, switching lanes at the compass point junctions. Driving in the opposite direction is the robot security car. Never the twain should meet! You need good reactions, but it might have been a more skilful game if there were more crossover points. No joystick option.

GRIDRUNNER
Producer: Quicksilva, 16K £6.95 (1)
More of an electronic grid meets centipede than a true grid game. See main review section.

LIGHT CYCLE
Producer: PSS, 16K £5.95
Light Cycle is similar in concept to Blind Alley where you fight it out on the grid with an opponent. In this case only two trails however, either against the computer or a second player. The graphics are simpler but more effective, representing the laser light trails left behind your craft. Seven speed levels, no joystick option. A very fast game to play for hours.

TRANSVERSION
Producer: Ocean, 16K £5.90 (1)
Author: C Urquhart & N Pierpoint
Undoubtedly Ocean's best and most addictive game to date. It combines simplicity of idea with speed and killer frustration. You are captain of the Elimax. Your task: to clear the galactic grid of alien spawn. There's no shooting since the Elimax simply destroys the spawn by moving over it. But there are 4 alien ships situated on each edge of the grid firing at you. Each one, operating and firing independently, moves along its edge, homing in on you, and aims its missiles along a line of the grid. You can be facing up to four missiles at one time and it's death to remain stationary, or operate on a single line, for more than a second. With each screen cleared you are faced with a different and more difficult arrangement of spawn to clear. There is also a 'between frame screen' of spiral shaped spawn for bonus points. Only one life so frustration levels can be dangerous. Excellent packaging, well used sound, very smooth graphics and good control keys. Joystick: Kempston, AGF and Protek. CRASH rating: Highly recommended, overall 83% M/C.

PAINTERS

Another of the earlier arcade type games which proved popular was Painter, and the idea has spawned many versions, several of which are available for the Spectrum. The principle behind a painter game is to make your character traverse a maze or grid, colouring the structure as he goes. Inevitably there is some nasty influence at work which tries to prevent this harmless activity ...

COLOUR CLASH
Producer: Romik, 16K £7.99
Author: I Morrison/D Anderson
Colour clash contains four phases in a paint-the-squares game which demands strategy as well as skill. In phase one you fill the numerous squares by 'painting' round them, and if you succeed, you have a chance to eat the pursuing paint pots pacman style. Phase two is a bonus points section where you must press the fire button at the right moment to guide it to the flashing arrow. Stage three is the same as stage one only you are forced to paint each square one at a time rather than dodging along any line. The fourth and most demanding, has you attempting to surround the paint pots. Three keyboard layouts, joystick: Kempston or Sinclair. Three skill levels, excellent graphics and good value for money.

HIGH RISE HARRY
Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
One of the most origiinal painter games. Harry must rustproof loads and loads of girders but he's being chased by the rustbugs. As in a Kong-type game, Harry's only way of avoiding the bugs is to jump over them, but he must paint every inch of the border before he can paint another on the same screen. Mean! Three screens including slides and lifts. Uses cursor keys, joystick: Kempston, AGF or Protek. Highly addictive and good value.

OH MUMMY
Producer: Gem Software, 16K £4.95 (1)
You are in charge of a party of archaeologists exploring Egyptian tombs. Each tomb has 5 levels, and on each you will find treasure houses, a scroll, a key, a mummy of the royal family, and two guardians. As soon as you enter a tomb, one of the guardians will be awakened and start chasing you. The other remains dormant unless you are unlucky enough to uncover it. You may only exit a tomb once the key has been uncovered, and you can kill off a guardian only after the scroll has been found. This may not sound like a 'painter' but in realtiy it is. The tomb is divided into squares with pathways between them. As you zip along a trail of dots shows your route and when all four sides of a square have been uncovered the contents of the square are revealed. It seems quite easy at first but at higher speeds and skill levels it becomes more addictive as the guardians become more intelligent. Excellent user-defined keys, joystick: AGF or Protek via cursors, good colour and graphics, 15 skill/speed levels, overall CRASH rating 69% — more fun than addictive perhaps, M/C.

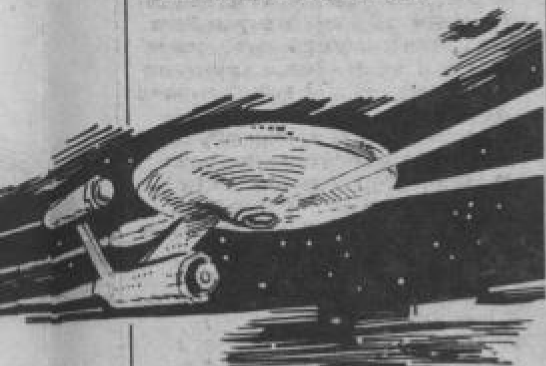
PAINTER
Producer: A&F, 48K £5.75
A classic version, simple, beautiful graphics, good sound and utterly addictive. You must aerosol the spaces between the paint pots and daffy paint rollers chase you round, chuckling gleefully when they catch you and roll you flat. You start off against one roller, then two, three and so on. While it's not difficult to begin with, it gets pretty fast when there are several rollers up against you. Good keyboard positions, no joystick option.

TRAXX
Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95 (1)
Author: Jeff Minter/Salamander
Producer by Salamander for Quicksilva, Traxx is basically a 'painter' game with an ingenious difference. You have a grid of boxes, 30 in all, and the base of the bottom centre box is already painted purple. You're a little green cursor, and as you move onto unpainted track it turns purple behind you. The object is to paint all the track, but the difference is that the paint is elastic — it won't stretch further than 3 sides of a box, so each box must be completed before moving onto the next. There's a chaser, of course, as many as 9 depending on the skill

level, and 9 playing speeds. Sensible control keys, joystick: Protek or AGF. Mixed views with the main criticism being that it was difficult to control in a silly rather than exciting way, it being too easy to overshoot a turning. If you do so the elastic paint zips back and you have to start again. Fair value for money, CRASH rating 61% M/C.

TREKKIES

From the earlier days Star Trek has spawned a number of computer versions, all basically alike. They usually have several skill levels and work on option menus which allow you to use Warp Engines, Impulse Engines, Phasers, Photon Torpedoes; view the short or long range scan, galaxy map or the immediate sector. Status reports show weaponry left, power, damage etc. Some give you a battle plan view, others a cockpit view with a more arcade element as you aim your phasers at the darting enemy. The enemy is usually the Klingon Empire, though there may be some Romulans around. All the games have star bases for docking and repair. The higher the skill level the more enemy ships and bases there are, and the less Federation star bases. Among the better programs, it's very much a matter of personal choice. Here we list the features of each briefly.



STARFIRE

Producer: Virgin, 48K £5.95
Author: M C Davis
Virgin always have good, clear instructions, and this was one of the better first issue games. Features: Galactic war report, detailing mission, aliens left, starbases and stardates left: Computer call — main menu: Long range scan, well laid out with the eight adjacent sectors shown: Navigation, menu for moving from sector to sector: Battlestations, arcade style viewscreen with four-directional movement and fire at visible enemy. Docking with a starbase is tricky, and there are also time portals in space as well as asteroid storms to contend with. On balance a reasonable game with ten skill levels.

STARSHIP ENTERPRISE

Producer: Silversoft, 48K £5.95
This comes with a good instruction manual. Two players can always play a star trek game, one reading, the other punching buttons. The galaxy map shows the 64 quadrants (8 x 8), each quadrant is sub-divided into 64 sectors. Commands are: Navigate which provides 2 grids, one for navigating within the sectors of a quadrant, the other for moving to a new quadrant: Short range scan, shows the contents of the quadrant in which the Enterprise sits: long range scan shows the eight adjacent quadrants: Phasors, switches you to arcade style view screen with four-directional movement and fire at the visible aliens: Torpedoes, allows you to engage the enemy from a distance, avoiding their weapons: Damage report, speaks for itself: Shields, allows you to set the level of defence: Computer offers you the main menu and also controls the status report, galaxy map, damage repairs and auto docking. The action is fast and furious if you move into a sector or quadrant occupied by the enemy, and it's difficult to break into your command computer if it's fighting, so have everything ready before engaging the enemy. Good value for money. Kempston joystick option for arcade sequences.

STAR TREK

Producer: Neptune, 48K £5.50
Author: Derek Brewster This version offers good value for money since the tape also contains MUNCHMAN, which happens to be a very good pac man version indeed. Neptune's Star Trek offers all the options as listed in the above review, the major difference being that it has battle plan views rather than arcade style fights with the aliens. In using the weaponry, you must enter the direction of attack (0 degrees to 360 degrees), and its strength, then sit back with bated breath as the phaser or missile trail moves across the screen towards the enemy. Instant action is required on engaging the Klingon rotters as they fire the instant you are spotted. Excellent graphics make this an engaging version to play at speeds which certainly require more than one Captain Kirk per game.

STAR TREK

Producer: Impact, 16K £5.00
Anyone thinking to themselves that here is a 16K version jolly good, should keep well away. I'm afraid this program isn't even good enough for the ZX81 from which it must have originated. Apart from the fact that it finishes loading with an OK report and nothing else, no instructions, no suggestion of skill levels (though there are supposed to be levels) not a thing to help; you then have to list the BASIC and tell it to run! There are no graphics beyond words and figures. This is totally unplayable and not acceptable by today's standards.

STAR TREK

Producer: R&R Software, 48K £5.50
This is a very playable version even though it pre-dates quite a few of the others. There is the familiar galaxy map with its 64 sectors, one of which is always displayed at the top of the screen, showing in graphic form the Enterprise, Kingon ships, Starbases and stars present. You are told the sector you are in, energy level, shield level, torpedoes left, the stardate, Klingons left and the status condition. Command options include manoeuvring, shields, phasers, photon torps, scan, galactic map and computer. The computer, when selected, allows you to navigate, use hyper-drive, use smart bomb, send out a probe, self-destruct and check status. In additon to the fiendish Klingons Romulan vessels with invisibility cloaks may attack you. Good value for money although the graphics could have been more colourful.

ZX TREK

Producer: Impact, 48K £6.50
After slating their earlier attempt, it would be nice to say something good about this version from the same company, but I'm afraid not. One reviewer points out that as it is written in BASIC it makes the game slow. Well Starship Enterprise is written in basic and that is pretty fast. Here the keyboard response is slow and erratic, there is optional sound, but sound slows it down further still, and the graphics are simply not good enough. It is also highly priced. Software producers should do themselves the favour of deleting out of date games like this one and spend some time producing better material.

ARCADE MISCELLANEOUS

AH DIDDUMS

Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50
Author: D H Lawson
Don't be fooled by the title — this is no game for cissies! When it first appeared it had all the reviewers tied in confused knots. You are a teddy bear, shut in the toy box with the other toys for the night, but your baby's crying so you must get out and go and comfort him. The only way out is by using all the coloured building bricks and assembling them correctly, whilst avoiding all the nasty toys who want to stop you. When you escape the box you realise it is inside another, bigger box, and that one's inside another, and so on ... What confused everyone at the time was the method used to assemble the bricks, and Imagine's cassette inlay is of no help, nor are the game's instructions on screen: this is the outline idea — pick up the brick and take to top of screen slightly to right of correct colour block, then drop it. The brick should slide into place as if by magic. Considering the packed screen, the graphics are excellent. Confusion of keys, but this isn't an arcade speed game. Watch out for clockwork soldiers, play people and the aggressive train — and the baby's crying — there, there, there ...

ANGLER

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: Dirk Olivier
A quiet day on the river fishing sounds like a load of fun, but this game manages to be about as thrilling as a real day on the river fishing! Beneath your boat pass 18 layers of various fish. With each game you're given 100 casts of the line to hook as many as you can. Some fish are fine to catch, some can be quite dangerous, and caught crabs eat away your catch. There are five levels of play which determine how close to your hook a fish must be to get caught. The language is BASIC, so are the graphics and the idea. May be okay for very young children, but there's nothing here for the serious player. Makes you wonder why 48K of memory was required. Virtually nil addictiveness and an overall CRASH rating of 39%.

AQUAPLANE

Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95
Author: John Hollis
Many of the games in this section, almost by definition, are quite original and Aquaplane is one of them. It's a nice day and you fancy a spot of water skiing. After a moment you're suddenly surrounded by rocks, but they're fairly easy to get through. Following on though, the water's instantly full of row boats, and if you get through again the so-called G and T rich-kids arrive, incompetently flapping their yachts all over the place. Should you survive the hee-haws, there's the sharks ... Skiier and boat are seen in profile, controls (up/down/thrust) move both boat and skiier, but not strictly in relation to each other, like the real think, the skiier inconveniently follows a slightly different path to the boat. This makes it difficult to get both safely through the gaps. It's a very enjoyable game to play, but the lasting appeal is slight. A clever touch is that the border colours are split horizontally to match exactly the colour of sea and sky in the game, thus giving the impression that the entire tv screen is in use. Try it first and buy if you like it.

BARRELDROP

Producer: Games Machine, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Russell Vincent
Starring Gordon and Flash, Barreldrop is a games compendium. Gordon suffers from blocked drainpipes—at least his house does. He cures this affliction by the curious method of rolling large barrels down the sloping roof and letting them fall through the blocked pipes. He only has five barrels and it's important they fall exactly down the centre of each pipe. If they don't he loses the barrel for good. Fortunately his faithful dog Flash is on hand sometimes and if called in time, the dog will recover the barrel and return it for another go. Clearing all five pipes successfully results in another screen which may be anything from a riddle to guess to an arcade shoot em up sequence. It's quite an original idea, in which nothing is too difficult, and yet there's so much that it becomes very difficult to get through. Playable and fun, good value, no joystick options. Overall CRASH rating 65% M/C.

CHOPPER RESCUE

Producer: Blaby, 48K £5.50
Author: G Capewell
The game starts with a helicopter dashing in to rescue the title from a dreadful spelling error, CHOPPER RISCUE it says, but the chopper comes back to insert an E and remove the I. As is their want, scientists are being entombed by radioactive waste dropped from overflying planes. You must rescue them in your (nicely animated) helicopter by shooting away the waste and making tunnels in it to reach them. Each one must be returned to the safety of the helipad before getting the next. The gun fires in the direction of travel and there's not much time. If you get hit by the falling waste you're dead. This is a very fast game, almost impossible with the cursor keys, and difficult enough with a Kempston AGF or Protek joystick. Addictive and good value. Recommended.



COOKIE

Producer: Ultimate, 16K £5.50
Also available in ROM cartridge form at £14.95. Ultimate's graphics are famous. In Cookie you are Charlie the Chef, with mixing bowl below and dustbins to the side. On the right is the pantry containing the ingredients which must be got into the bowl. Unfortunately, the ingredients are pretty wild and they're accompanied by assorted objects that shouldn't be in the pantry and would upset the Ministry of Health officials if they knew about them. Using flour bombs to momentarily stun, you must knock the ingredients into the mixing bowl, and the rotters into the bin. Should you get it the wrong way round you lose points, time energy and everything. Each screen provides different and more difficult ingredients. Another game that needs a joystick, Kempston or Protek. Hi-score, one or two player games, 8-directional movement and the smoothest of graphics around. Addictive and highly recommended.

CYBERTANKS

Producer: Star Dreams, 16K £5.50
A complex maze of green blocks is the home of the enemy cybertanks. Take your tank round and shoot 'em

up. You can blast away the blocks to get at them, but they are fast. Three lives, hall of fame, joystick: Kempston AGF or Protek. Nice graphics and playable, but perhaps not very addictive.

DOOMBUGS

Producer: Workforce, 16K £5.50 (1)

This is an original type of creepie crawlie game but it is not a 'centipede' game. There are basically two screens. In the first our hero, Tarant Tula, finds himself in the Grubbers' Lair. There's a trap-door leading to the next screen which only opens after repeated hammerings of Tarant Tula's head. There's also a pile of honey for the bugs to eat, but Tarant (to use his first name) must take a mouthful of the honey between each attempt on the door. The Grubbers, little round things, wander about and when they meet a green, squirmy Bubbergrubber is formed. These eat honey too, and should two of them meet a Red Backed Grubber results. These are the ones that kill off old Tarant if they catch him. Aim is to get through the trap door before any amount of Red Backs are bred. Tarant can, however, eat the Grubbers and Bubbergrubbers. Once through and Tarant is presented with a simple maze guarded by three Red Backs. If he should get through safely he arrives in another lair where the bugs breed faster. Neat graphics and a pretty maddeningly addictive game to play. Only one life makes for terminal frustration on nearing a hi-score. Continuous movement makes Tarant Tula a bit difficult to control although the control keys are sensibly placed. No joystick option. Overall CRASH rating 67% M/C.

EXTERMINATOR

Producer: Silversoft, 16K £5.95 (1)
Author: I Morrison & D Anderson

This is a very good 'Berserk' type game in which you are pitted against seven types of robot with varying characteristics and one thing in common—they're out to get you! Level promotion occurs automatically on reaching the required number of points. A novel feature is the provision of two sets of control keys which allow either 8-directional movement or rotational movement, both with directional fire. Strategy demands that you shoot up the more dangerous types of robots first to stay alive for longer. Sensible keyboard positions, joystick: Kempston, AGF and Protek. Good value for money, overall CRASH rating 83% M/C.

GOLD DIGGER

Producer: Blaby, 48K £4.95

It's all underground and you're tunnelling mines looking for the gold nuggets. Purple gnuggets gnashers are hot on your trail, however, so it is important to dig strategically round the red rocks so you can dislodge them to block off the tunnels or even drop them down and squash the gnashers. Nine speed levels. Joystick: AGF or Protek, Kempston. Cursor keys. Not as addictive as most other Blaby games, but a good beginner's game anyway.

GOLD MINE

Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95

They say this is a strategy game, but that's hardly true. You do need some strategy to go for the gold in the quickest way, but it's not the main ingredient. Use the lift to go up or down from the surface and then dig towards the gold sites. Not everything that glitters is gold though. Tunnels can collapse and there are underground streams. Energy runs out fast underground, especially if you are carrying gold. In addition, the lift may collapse if you are carrying too much weight. Replenish energy by returning to the surface and depositing gold in the bank. In any event, a rather slow game with limited appeal, but probably good value for younger children.

GOLD RUSH

Producer: THORN EMI, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Martin Harris

The gold mines of Oron are bottomless caverns where gold nuggets rain down from the roof. The Oronian miners place girders across the caverns to catch the nuggets and direct them into buckets. Life would be pleasant were it not for the skulls that float about eating Oronians and moving the girders around—and of course the falling nuggets can be very painful to an unprotected Oronian head! The screen is split into three equal segments, a safe home to the right to which an Oronian cannot return, a store for the girders to be used on the left, and in the centre the cavern itself. Directional keys move the Oronian about and the firing key positions the girder. Nuggets may roll to the left or the right when hitting a girder, so some strategy is required to keep the structure working to your advantage. Points are scored for a nugget hitting a girder, and more for getting one into a bucket at the base of the screen. At the higher skill levels the skulls will eat the nuggets as they fall. Unfortunately, there's no sound, but the graphics are smooth and colourful, an unusual and medium addictive game, two keyboard posiitons. Overall CRASH rating 63% M/C.

GRAND PRIX DRIVER

Producer: Britannia, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Chris Weber

Along with Thorn EMI's Road Racer and DK Tronics' Speed Duel, a contender for the 3D Spectrum 'Pole Pole Position' game. The effect of the road winding about and the moving landscape in the background is quite good in this version, and the hollow graphics of the racing cars also works quite well, but the main drawback is that your car is quite hard to control. When overtaking, an indicator at the bottom tells you which way the car to be overtaken will veer, but to get past safely it is essential to come almost to a halt. If you manage to pass the 30 cars on the track then a little man appears and wavers a flag to tell you that you've won. Good, if overlong, explosions on crashing. General feeling was that this game can become repetitive quite quickly. Good keyboard positions, joystick: Kempston and Sinclair (Interface 2). Fair to average, overall CRASH rating 55%. Compiled M/C.

GROUND FORCE ZERO

Producer: Titan, 16K £5.00

At first glance it looks like a simple game, but in fact it is quite hard. Very similar to Romik's 'Spectra Smash', which has more options than this version. Your plane keeps crossing the towering skyscrapers of New York, looking for a place to land. There isn't anywhere, so with a genocidal brainwave you decide to bomb the city flat to make a landing strip. With each pass over the city your plane gets lower, so it's essential to knock out the biggest towers before they knock you out.

Several skill levels with taller buildings. Simple to play with only a bomb control. Despite its simplicity, reasonably addictive.

GUN LAW

Producer: Vortex, 16K £5.95

In real life the famous James Gang were reputed to be lousy shots, unable to hit a man six feet from them when all five tried to gun him down. However, Vortex have put the whole thing right with this well made programme where, as Marshall, you can stalk them down the dusty streets of town, firing at figures as they appear in doorways and windows. Your reflexes must be fast as you won't get a second chance from these baddies. Bullets are restricted, so it's important not to shoot innocent people. Despatching a baddie earns you dollars. The graphics are generally good, although the gunsight could have been better. Reasonably interesting and indecently addictive.

JAWS REVENGE

Producer: Workforce, 16K £5.95

This is a game for hungry people. You're a shark on a jaws-agape-feeding-frenzy. Fish, swimmers (moving at Olympic speeds) and boatmen all go down your throat. Some fish have a habit of turning red and poisonous, so don't eat those, and the fishermen in their boats throw harpoons or drop depth charges to stun you. You can catch the depth charges and defuse them before they reach the sea bed. And the sea bed itself isn't flat so don't run into it. It's a sort of Penetrator meets Galaxians under water. An amusing game with good graphics. No joystick option.

JAWZ

Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95

On the same theme, Jawz is the other way round. You must use your underwater gun sights to shoot up the maruding sharks, whilst avoiding the gunge dropping from poisonous jelly fish on the surface. The game was originally made by Elfin — it's being marketed by DK Tronics probably hasn't made all that much difference because unfortunately it has a very limited appeal for serious arcade addicts. Good for younger children.

JUNGLE FEVER

Producer: A&F, 16K £6.90

Get your man to jump over the traps dug by Pigmies and then swing across a pit using a rope tied to a tree. What comes after that is hard to say because this game with its effective graphics is not easy. The damned rope got me every time. Good fun to play and reasonably addictive but perhaps a little overpriced. No joystick option.

JUNGLE TROUBLE

Producer Martech, 16K £6.95

A game with a similar theme to Jungle Fever. Collect an axe and leap across stepping stones set in a crocodile infested river. On the other side you climb a ladder to get to the trees, which you must chop down. The trees will fall on you (if you're not quick to jump out of the way) and they blunt the axe — so back for another. Monkeys live in the trees and steal your axe but you can chop them with it — if it's not already blunt. If they steal it — it's back for another. With the forest laid waste all you have to do is swing across a fire pit using a rope, jump a chasm and then home for tea. A busy game with plenty of opportunities for failure and so pretty addictive.

KNOT IN 3D

Producer: New Generation, 48K £5.95

Extremely hard to see how this extraordinary game works at first. It could really be thought of as a grid game or a bozy boa game but with you as the snake actually in the screen but in a 3 dimensional space. Confused? Well you will be. Steer yourself through the white void avoiding your own brightly coloured trail and that of the chasers, twisting and turning to find space to move in before it all gets filled up. Uses cursor keys so AGF or Protek joystick would help. Tremendous value for money, and addictive too.

LUNA CRABS

Producer: Micromega, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Mervyn Escourt

You must know the feeling—there you are, on a Saturnian moon, away from the safety of your explorer's ship, taking samples of moon rocks, when suddenly there are all these nasty red crabs surrounding you and gobbing green spit all over the place. Fortunately, you have your guided missile cannon. Descriptive 3D graphics are effective in this simple shoot-back-at-em game, as you whirl and turn to avoid the green goo and to aim at the fiendish crabs. Good animation and colourful graphics, but in the end a game with limited playng appeal. Sensible control keys, no joystick option and only one skill level. Overall CRASH rating 62% M/C.

LUNAR JETMAN

Producer: Ultimate, 48K £5.50 (1)

The follow-up to 'Jetpac' is, as expected, a fabulous game. If it has a drawback it's that it is too difficult to play, but as is usual with this sort of game, experts can get a long way and prove that you can score! After failing to construct his space shop in 'Jetpac' properly, Jetman has crashed on the moon with only a Moonglider for company, plus a clutch of assorted and unexplained equipment, alien missile bases and hordes of horrible alien creatures. Half the fun of the game is discovering what makes what tick, since Jetman can pick up objects and transport them himself, or drop them on the Moonglider for transport. He can get inside as well, where he's safe from the aliens, and drive the Moonglider along. But it won't cross holes in the ground. These must be filled with bridging units carried on the side of the vehicle. Whenever an alien hits Jetman, it creates another crater. The basic aim of the game is to destroy the alien bases—but this task certainly must rank among the most heroically difficult of all time! Superb graphics and sound (improved with talking aliens if you have a Currah Microspeech unit attached), a lot of well planned keys which make the joystick options (Kempston, AGF, Protek) a bit redundant. One or two player games. Overall CRASH rating 95%—highly recommended. M/C.

MINED-OUT

Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £4.95
Author: Ian Andrew

Forget the inlay card, which was probably written by a stoned Quicksilva copy writer, and play the game! You are presented with a blank field, densely sown with mines and you must get to the other side without blowing up. Take a step at a time and watch the warning which tells you whether there is a mine in an adjacent square — is it left, right or ahead? What happens when there are two or even three mines? The tension mounts and clever, logical thinking is your only safeguard. Level two offers maidens in distress to be rescued and later levels still confront you with things that chase and make you move quickly. Nine levels in this most nail-biting game. And it hasn't dated a bit, still worth the money if you haven't tried it. Recommended.

MOLAR MAUL

Producer: Imagine, 16K £5.50

With a wicked glint in their teeth, Imagine invite you to take part in the fight against the DK (Tronics) menace. Your weapons are a toothbrush and some Imagico toothpaste. The screen opens (literally) with a gaping mouth and lively clean white teeth. Toffees and other gunk appear at the centre, exciting the interest of the horrid DK bugs, and in seconds the teeth are beginning to yellow, purple and black out all over the mouth. The trick with this game is manoeuvring the wretched toothbrush into exactly the correct position for the toothpaste to be squeezed from the tube. An excellent game with wonderful graphics, but so depressing to watch! I'm afraid it left an unpleasant taste in my mouth, but I have to say it's good value. Joystick: Fuller.

MRS MOPP

Producer: Computasolve, 48K £5.50 (1)
Author: Tina Billet

The game which sets out to prove that it's better to create a mess than have to clean it up. Mrs Mopp's family must be the messiest in the world. They litter cups, clothes, dust and just about everythng else all over the floor. Moppsie has five utensils to help her in the task, but only the correct utensil will pick up the appropriate rubbish. There's also a kitchen sink, washing machine and dustbin she must use when the utensil carried becomes full. Picking up a utensil is done simply by moving up against it and it can be deposited by reversing the sequence. Like any hard working housewife, Moppsie likes a tipple now and then to keep up her spirits, but if you let her spirit level get too high she becomes drunk and disorderly. If the work load becomes too much, she'll give up and leave home! The only extra aids are magical spells, but all too often these seem to be out of stock. Well placed control keys, joystick: Kempston. Cute graphics, smooth movement and an original game to play. Reasonably addictive, overall CRASH rating 69% M/C.

NAANAS

Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95

The cassette inlay says 'Naanas', the title screen, 'Nanas', obviously a bit confused! Another of Mikrogen's new games which insists that there are user-definable keys when there aren't—obviously a bit confused! The aim of Naanas (or whatever) is to dash around catching bananas which a monkey is throwing down. If they hit the floor and you tread on one, you slip over and lose a life. In addition there are coconuts dropping with painful consequences. And that's it. Graphics are reasonable but pretty simple and the monkey doesn't move at all. The cursor control keys work quite well in this game, no joystick option. Pretty and fun to play for a short while. Overall CRASH rating 52% M/C.

PARADROIDS

Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £5.95
Author: C Hinsley

If Paradroids scores, it's on its 'differentness'. The idea is to move up and down your energy beam, firing left and right at the paradroids. The jump off the various ledges all the way up the sides of the nuclear reactor you are defending. Should any successfully parachute to the bottom they reach the reactor and mutate into much more vicious droids. The graphics are quite good, brightly coloured, move smoothly and react quickly to the control keys (well laid out). the result is a reasonable game, but somewhere the idea has faltered—it's too easy to play and so becomes boring. The inlay states that there are user- definable keys, but there aren't. Overall CRASH rating 54% M/C.

ODYSSEY 1

Producer: Perfection, 16K £5.50 (1)
Author; T Williams

First prize winner of the games section of Computech 83, Odyssey 1 is a three-part mixture of arcade games, designed to test the skills and reflexes of shoot em up freaks. Screen 1 is a 'Berserk' type with your man at the cross roads of four rooms filled with firing robots. He can move in any direction with rotational controls, go forward and fire up or down at will. Getting through this screen lands you up in an 'Arcadia' type situation where wrap around wedges of alien ships fly overhead dropping missiles on you as you shoot up at them. Mean trick here is that once dropped, the missiles wrap around vertically, gradually filling the screen with weaponry. Screen 3 pits you against pterodactyl-like creatures which swoop down in a wholly original and alarming manner. The general feeling of our reviewers was that this was a surprisingly difficult and addictive game to play. The graphics are fairly small but the 100% machine code program makes everything work extremely well and smoothly. No joystick option, overall CRASH rating 72%, recommended.

OSTRON

Producer: Softek, 16K £5.95

Formerly named Joust, Softek for some reason, changed its name. There's a lot of the 'You're the sole surviving White Knight, Guardian, of the Lore, etc' on the inlay blurb, but basically you're on this Ostron thing (electronic ostrich) and the enemy are variously-coloured buzzard thingies. There are several floating platforms on which you can land before rising to the occasion by flapping your wings and attacking the enemy. When you meet, face to face, the one's who's highest wins. First buzzards are pretty daft and easy, but later ones become fiendish in their attempts to get you. All in all a very enjoyable game, with good graphics and sound. Don't hit the water — you drown. 100 percent machine code, joystick: Kempston. Good value.

PSST

Producer: Ultimate, 16K £5.50

It sounds a bit rude but it's a wonderful game with Ultimate's usual magnificent graphics. Robbie the robot must keep the swarming insect life from eating his plant. To do this there are various spray cans lining the brick walls of the garden. Each level adds a different insect to the collection and the trick is that you must use the correct spray on the right insect or it only serves to stun for a moment. The insects also kill off Robbie as well as the plant, which shrinks away if it's eaten for too long. Letting it grow results in a bloom and a new level. Amazing graphics, 100 percent machine code, 8-directional movement, one or two player game, sensible control keys and Kempston joystick. Recommended. Also available in ROM cartridge form for £14.95.

PUSH OFF

Producer: Software Projects, 16K £5.95(1)
Author: Andrew Giles

There are now several Spectrum versions of the arcade original, 'Pengy' available—Blaby's 'Dodo' was one of the first. Software Projects' version is excellent. Bertha the ladybird is in a garden being pursued by four nasty insects out for her ichor (blood to you). The garden is full of green bricks which she can burn out of her way, or send

shooting off in the direction in which she's travelling. By this method she can crush her enemies to death. The insects can also burn up the bricks to reach her. Four bells in each quarter of the screen, if rung by touching them, cause the insects to go into a temporary tizzy and make them vulnerable. The colours are bright, graphics fast and smooth, good sound, rather poor control key layout, joystick: AGF, Protek or Kempston, eight skill levels. CRASH rating, very good to excellent, overall 85% M/C.

QUACKERS

Producer: Rabbit, 16K £5.99
Quackers is designed more for children than shoot 'em up addicts, but its cheerful graphics should make it popular. It's set in a fairground duck shooting gallery, where four rows of repeated objects, ducks, cats, rabbits, faces and a giant turtle, move alternately in opposite directions before your gun barrel. User-defined keys or cursor, which means you can use AGF or Protek joysticks.

RACE FUN

Producer: Rabbit, 48K £5.99
The Spectrum hardly has the sort of graphics capability of the big road racing games in the arcades, but as far as Spectrum racers go, this is a pretty good one. An overhead view shows the track which varies from wide to very narrow, straight and curved. Off you go with several others cars. Bumping another car or running off the road, slows you down and costs fuel heavily. The object is to get as many points as possible before running out of petrol. The graphics are very good with the cars being quite large. User-defined control keys (accelerate, brake, left, right) or cursor so you can use a Protek or AGF joystick.

RIDER

Producer: Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95 (1)
Authors: Roy poole & Terry Murray
The writers of 'Yomp' have come up with another quasi-military theme game in two parts. First screen you leap from a plane on a parachute and try to land on one of a stream of riderless motorbikes below. These have been supplied by the resistance movement of the occupied country you are spying on. If you succeed in landing on one it cuts instantly to the second screen. This is a 3D view of a country road, heavily sowed with visible mines, down which you must guide your careering bike. Although the details and large graphics are quite good the game ends up being unplayable. You can't brake and turn at the same time for instance. It all palls very quickly and ends up being much slower than it should. Reasonable control keys, seven skill levels, no joystick option, only a fair game. Overall CRASH rating 50%. Mixture of BASIC and M/C.

RIVER RESCUE

Producer: Thorn EMI, 48K £6.95 (1)
Author: Phil Snell
You're in control of a river speed boat. The screen shows the north and south banks above and below, everything scrolling from right to left. You can hold the boat's position to the left (safer) side, middle or right (dangerous) side. The object is to rescue explorers from the north bank jetty and land them at the south bank jetty. As the two jetties are opposite, you can't just commute between them. The boat can take up to six explorers at a time before landing them, but if you lose the boat, you lose your explorers too. The river is infested with crocodiles, sand banks and logs, which you must avoid. If you're very good, a rival firm overflies the river dropping mines on you. More points scored for travelling at the right of the screen where your reflexes have to be very fast. A fast, addictive and original game with neat graphics. Good control key positions, joystick: Kempston, Sinclair, 1 or 2 player games. Recommended. Overall CRASH rating 74% M/C.

ROAD RACER

Producer: Thorn EMI, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Graham Wisdom
As its name implies, this is another contender for the Spectrum 'Pole Position'. The 3D Road/Landscape effect is pretty good, and unlike Britannia's Grand Prix Driver, the graphics are solid. However the road in this version does not actually bend as you go round corners, although the background does move. Controls are very good; in addition to brake/accelerate and left/right, keys 1 and 2 select lo or hi gear. If you use the gears incorrectly you will blow your engine. There are several other cars to overtake before reaching the finishing line. Perhaps one problem with the otherwise excellent inlay card, is that they don't explain how to get going, which is a little confusing at first (see review in issue 1). Bright and large graphics, rather poor sound, joystick: Kempston, Sinclair. Overall CRASH rating 70%—good M/C.

SANTA

Producer: Artic, 16K £5.95
Produced for a rush Christmas market, this tape contains seven different games in a compendium. All the games are short and only one, 'Rudolph Goes Racing' is fair. Judging by the names and games quality, the tape is aimed at younger children and grandmas and probably won't be in circulation for very long. Overall CRASH rating 28%. BASIC.

SHADOWFAX

Producer: Postern, 16K £5.95
Shadowfax came out with a lot of ballyhoo at £7.95, which was grossly overpriced, so it's nice to see Postern have dropped it now. No one can complain about the graphics which are quite excellent. Unfortunately the game has very little else to offer. You're mounted on your white charger (the inlay blurb might lead to suppose this was some Hobbit-like adventure) and riding against the black horses that gallop on from the left at random heights. You can fire a bolt at the approaching enemy but you must then explode the bolt at exactly the right moment. And that's the game — you are up against the points. Mind you, it is mesmerising, so you do make mistakes. Definitely a game to get a look at first —if you like the idea, you won't regret the graphics. No joystick option.

SHARK ATTACK

Producer: Romik, 16K £5.99
Author: Ian Anderson
The theme from 'Jaws' works nicely but the rest of the continuous sound will eventually drive you mad. You must save octopusses (or octopi) from the sharks by weaving a protective net around the octopus. Should a shark eat the octopus before you screen it, then the shark can eat your net. Having either succeeded or failed in this task, the rest of the game is to fill up as much of the screen with net without getting eaten yourself. Three levels, one or two player games. Joystick: Kempston or Sinclair. A game with very limited appeal and no addictive qualities, but it might well appeal to younger children, a sort of Painter meets Jaws.

SIEGE

Producer: Postern, 16K £5.99
Author: Mike Singleton
Throw rocks down from a high castle wall onto the massed attackers trying to climb up. As the rocks fall they knock the attackers off, often several at a time as one falling man catches another. The stick figure animation is cute and the game should appeal to younger children, but it is very limited as far as the serious addicted arcade player is concerned. Simple control keys.

SNAKE PIT

Producer: Postern, 16K £5.95
Author: Mike Singleton
This is pacman variant, but it is too original to lump in with the rest of the yellow gobblers. The 'maze' is a live, wriggling one. Seven different coloured snakes are trapped in their nests, surrounded by a screenful of green eggs. Your job is to eat all the eggs. Only the red snake can eat eggs, so it instantly frees itself and begins eating round the screen, freeing the other snakes as it goes. When you meet a snake head on there is a nasty little gulping sound and that's it until you press S for another game. Should you clear the screen you then get a chance to eat the snakes (tail first) as well as the eggs. I never got there; this is very difficult. The graphics are superb, quite enough to turn the stomach! Pity the control keys are so awkward, and no joystick option. Addictive and good value.

SPECTRA SMASH

Producer: Romik, 16K £6.99
Author: John Bell
This is similar to Titan's Ground Force Zero, but rather more complex, in that you have limited height control over the plane, and there are gun turrets on some buildings firing at you, none on the easiest level, more and more on the harder ones. Bombing the guns first obviously helps. Should you land successfully, having bombed the lot flat, the angry natives reward you by sending out a fuel tanker so you can take off and do the thing over again at a higher level. Of course they win in the end! Three lives, hi-score, eight levels, joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek, Sinclair. m/c. Recommended.

SPECTRON

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Mark Kirkby
Probably Virgin's best shoot em up, probably their best game in fact. This is a no-win 'Berserk' type game that demands fast reflexes and a sixth sense to get very far. One reviewer was able to count as many as 216 enemy robots on the screen at one time. Enemies include Swarmers, Speeders, Launchers and Electrons (which leave indestructible electronic fences behind them). Your robot fires automatically when on the move and control is 8-directional. Well thought out, with detailed graphics, very good sound, no joystick option but well placed control keys. Overall CRASH rating 77%. Recommended. M/C.

SUB CHASE

Producer: Gem, 16K £4.95 (1)
You are in control of a ship equipped with depth charges which can be set to explode at nine different depths depending on which numeric key you select. Beneath you, submarines cross the screen in one direction, occasionally firing missiles up at you which must be dodged. The art is to select the correct depth at which to explode the charge to kill the sub. At higher skill levels the subs change depth randomly. On the whole a game more intended to appeal to younger children. 4 skill levels, reasonable graphics, poor sound, simple control keys. CRASH rating 49%—poor for addicts, good for children. M/C.

TRANZ AM

Producer: Ultimate, 16K £5.50
It's post-holocaust America and the country's a barren desert with a few cities here and there where you can get fuel. Otherwise a clutch of Mad Maxalikes in deadly Black Turbos are out to kill you while you hunt the wastes looking for eight gold cups. The playing screen is only a 600th of the available area. Instruments on the left show; time taken, miles travelled, a map of the States showing cities and your location, local radar showing cups (if any) and enemies, speedo, fuel gauge, engine temperature and lives left. 8-directional movement, excellent graphics, highly playable. Joystick: Kempston. Highly recommended. Also available in ROM cartridge form for £14.95.

TURBO DRIVER

Producer: Boss (UK), 16K £5.95
Another for the racing car addicts. Turbo Driver features very large vehicle graphics and an attempt (not entirely successful) at 3D through perspective. Six other cars leap away from the starting line when you stall. You must catch them up. The cars and several other hazards make life difficult, and if you go too carefully you'll run out of fuel. The track is quite straight, and there aren't those wonderful explosions of the original arcade version, but this is a popular programme and does as well as the Spectrum will allow. m/c. Joystick: Kempston.

3D ANT ATTACK

Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95 (1)
Author: Sandy White
Some of the best ever 3D graphics for the Spectrum which work excellently not only on the numerous buildings but also on the softer forms of the hero, heroine, and dreaded ants which swarm through the walled city of Antescher. The object of the game is to jump over the one spot low enough in the outer wall, find your girlfriend (or boyfriend—you can select which), and escape before the ants get you. You can run and jump in four directions, throw grenades to kill the ants over varying distances, or stun them by jumping up and down on them. The scene can be viewed from any one of four angles. It isn't easy! There are 12 control keys required and it takes a lot of time to get used to them, but the graphics make it all worthwhile. One criticism aimed at the game is that there's more technical virtuosity in the program than game play and it can become repetitive after a while. Nevertheless, an amazing game. No joystick option really possible. Very highly recommended, overall CRASH rating 85% M/C.

3D COMBAT ZONE

Producer: Artic, 48K £5.95
According to Artic, this is their best-selling programme to date, and no wonder. The first real 3D effect in the Spectrum. Travel across the flat plain and battle with enemy tanks, flying saucers and super tanks — a kill or be killed battle of wits among the pyramids in real time. The game gives a tremendous sense of moving about in a space and can be quite hpynotic. Battle radar to spot the enemy and calculate distance. Joystick: Kempston. A first rate game and highly recommended.

3D DEATHCHASE

Producer: Micromega, 16K £6.95 (1)
Author: Mervyn Escourt
Selected as Game Of The Month in issue 1, this is just a fabulous game. The idea is simple; at the base of the screen is the front of your motorbike with two gloved hands gripping the

handlebars. Ahead is a flat landscape with a few trees and two other bikers circling around. As soon as you accelerate to give chase they ride hell for leather. When you're in range you can start firing. When they're both blown away the scene changes to night time and repeats, then back to day 2 and so on. Occasionally a helicopter and a tank cross the horizon and gain more points for you if hit. Bu what makes this game one of the most compelling to play are the trees you must weave through in pursuit of the enemy bikers. With each screen they get more numerous, and the effect of whipping through them is truly alarming! Return of The Jedi has nothing on this! Excellent graphics (marvellous explosions), superb sound, sensible control keys, joystick: Kempstson. Excellent. Overall CRASH rating 92% M/C.

3D DESERT PATROL

Producer: Computer Rentals, 16K £5.95

This simply isn't a very good prgramme. The 3D is primitive and the graphics uninteresting. You must take your tank in between minefields to the eventual safety of a road, whilst avoiding fire of enemy tanks. For a start off you cannot move and fire at the same time; if an enemy tank gets into position and fires everything stops and you're dead — no evading; to avoid the enemy you merely turn until they disappear from the screen; if you creep round the edge of minefields then they won't fire on you anyway. So all it adds up to is a dull and boring game. Cursor keys and 0 to fire — allows use of AGF or Protek joysticks.

3D TANX

Producer: DK Tronics, 16K £4.95

3D here refers to the distant bridge where rows of tanks pass before your gunsight and the realistic trajectory of your shells which must be aimed right to stradle the thickness of the bridge. The graphics are very good and so is the sound. Skill and timing are essential to good scores — and staying alive, because the tanks fire back. Nowhere near as easy as it looks, and at the price, excellent value. Joystick: Kempston with Softlink II.

3D TUNNEL

Producer: New Generation, 16/48K £5.95

You're rushing headlong down a tunnel and different objects flash past you, which you must shoot. There's bats, spiders, rats and finally a delightful Underground train, complete with twinkling headlights and passengers inside. The latter must be dodged rather than shot. Running into the sides of the tunnel cause loss of a life (five in all), and you can undertake this subterranean madness at three speeds. In 16K it loads in two parts and there is no Underground train. Mixed opinions, some liked it, some didn't.

3D VORTEX

Producer: J K Greye, 16K £5.95

This is very similar to 3D Tunnel, except that the tunnel (or vortex) is defined in multitudes of coloured dots rather than solid blocks, which gives more of a tunnel-like feel. The tunnel also twists and squirms like a mad thing so it's quite a trick to stay safely in the centre of it. On the other hand, the 3D animation of the objects isn't quite so good and there are no skill levels which means it quickly loses interest. There is a long but very amusing intro in the 2-part load. User-defined control keys, so it works with almost any joystick. Good value but limited playability.

TRAIN GAME

Producer: Microsphere, 16K £5.95 (1)

This is another game simple in concept and marvellous to play. In fact it's dangerously addictive and should probably be put on the government proscribed drugs list! A complex railway layout with 24 sets of lettered points, allows you to drive up to three trains around, picking up passengers from three stations. On the higher skill levels runaway goods trains also enter the system and must be redirected to get rid of them. Passengers arrive on the platforms in the colour of the train they want to catch, and get angry if kept waiting too long, turning white with rage! Great sound, nice graphics, maddenly frustrating to play and simply wonderful! Get one today! Seven skill levels with various sub-levels; rating, very good. Overall CRASH rating 76% M/C.

WILD WEST HERO

Producer: Timescape, 48K £5.90 (1)
Author: Silicon Kid (!?)

Step out into the cacti-strewn desert and fight it out with rampaging gangs of banditos in this good 'Berserk' type game. Instead of maze walls there are the cacti and treacherous trees, which kill on contact. You're armed with a continuous repeat firing Colt 45— and just as well, the bandits are numerous. One of the best 'Berserk' games yet with large graphics, smooth movement, sensible control keys, joystick: Kempston. Good sound, increasingly difficult screens. Overall CRASH rating 83% M/C. Recommended.

ZIP ZAP

Producer: Imagine, 48K £5.50
Author: Ian Weatherburn

In Zip Zap you are a severely damaged robot with a motor that won't turn off and only limited braking power, so you tend to travel in circles. A teleport delivers you (nice graphic) into a swirling mass of miserable aliens from whose deadly touch you are partly protected by a failing shield. The idea is to buzz chaotically around in confusing circles to collect four power units. When you touch one it automatically attaches itself to the teleportal. When all four are in position you can get back to the teleportal in time. By Imagine's standards, not their best game, but still better than most games around. Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek, Fuller.

SPORTS SIMULATION



Athletics on the computer screen may seem contrary to the vigorous nature of sport, but a number of programmers have turned their hands to simulating various sports with mixed success. At least playing them on your Spectrum is somewhat more active than watching the real thing on telly.

BOWLS

Producer: Lotus-Soft, 48K £4.50 (1)
Author: Derek Jones

If you're fed up with zapping aliens or roaring round the race track, why not retire to the peace and quiet of an English bowling green? This game offers the services of the computer as a mediator rather than player between two opponents. The computer throws the 'jack' and then each player has 4 alternative turns to bowl, the object being to get your bowl as close to the 'jack' as possible. Cursor keys 5 and 8 are used to determine direction of throw, and the strength is determined by choosing the weight of ball, a heavier ball going further. There is a feature which diagramatically shows how close the bowls are to the jack after each throw. The game is neatly executed but suffers the common fault of sports simulations — the lack of ultimate reality undermines the skills required to play it. However, it is good value for money and will doubtless appeal to many. Overall CRASH rating 57%, good if you like the idea. BASIC.

CHAMPIONSHIP DARTS

Producer: Shadow, 16K
Author: D Lockett

You might think a game of throwing skill would be difficult to translate into a computer game, but Shadow Software have managed very nicely in this cute and gentle game. After a fine title card, a large, traditional darts' board appears. By pressing any key you freeze a fast moving sweep line, which determines the segment your dart has hit. At the base is a cross section through the board showing the rings — double, single, treble, single, outer bull, bull. It's elegant, simple and very effective. A sensible demo/instruction mode shows you how to do it. You can select the number of points required for a game, enter the two players' names, and the program guides you through three shots in each turn. You must finish with a double or bull of course. Perhaps not exactly exciting, but a fine game and worth the money.

FOOTBALL MANAGER

Producer: Addictive Games, 48K £6.95
Author: Kevin Toms

Universally agreed as one of the best of Spectrum games of any type. This is as much strategy as simulation as you choose a team from 64 on offer, and try to work your way up from Division four to win the FA Cup. The background to the game is quite realistic, with players losing strength value and gaining it by resting a match, morale worsening with lost matches, declining crowds and resulting loss of gate money, and all the technical and strategic problems of a club manager. Having selected your team, studied the opponent's dossier, you can sit back and watch the fully animated, edited highlights of the match! An amazingly engrossing game with seven levels of play and highly recommended.

GOLF

Producer: Abrasco, 16K £6.95

For 16K users this is a very good program with quickly assembled graphics that clearly show positions of tee, green, fairways, bunkers, tree hazards and rough. There's no animated golfer as in the Virgin game, but it's made up for with clearly visible balls that follow a path of your shot. You can input commands to use a 1 or 3 wood of given strengths, or 1-9 irons which ask wehther you want a soft or hard strike. If you pick between 7 and 9 iron, you are realistically asked whether it should be a chip shot or a pitch. When both players are on the green the screen scrolls to a close up which uses a 20 foot scale for judging the distance of the putt. The only drawback might be a tendency to crash if an incorrect variable is entered. An attractive and responsively fast game. One/two players and choose how many holes to play.

GOLF

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: David Thomson

In this version of the noble game, one to four players may take part and play between one and eighteen holes, choosing handicaps up to 28. The higher (worse) your handicap the more erratically random your shots become. There's an option on five clubs with a choice of strength between 0 and 10. When your selection has been made and you have estimated the compass point direction in which to swing, an animated golfer appears and hits the ball. Once on the green a putter is automatically selected. While fun to play there are several drawbacks. The graphics are very slow, each hole being built up character line by character line. The random quality of the handicap system undermines its value — everyone should choose a zero handicap! And the compass points are needlessly difficult as North keeps shifting direction with every hole. Worst of all Virgin have been selling the game with a glaring bug — when asked if you would like another game, there's an incorrect command in the BASIC which stops the program dead. It's easily corrected but annoying.

GOLF

Producer: Artic, 48K £5.95

Sub-titled St Andrews, this game is based on an accurate reproduction

of the world famous golf course. Each hole is drawn out showing the well known details and a brief description and history is given. One or two players may take part, playing a proper game or single holes of their choice. You are asked whether you wish to use a wood or iron, strength of shot, expressed as a percentage, whether you want the shot to go straight, fade or hook, and what angle. Arriving on the green the screen cuts to a close up for the putting. The graphics are black on green and very simply drawn. The program is in BASIC so after typing in figures you ENTER, but words are accepted automatically. The temptation to enter W for wood will result in a break into program — the main drawback of an otherwise interesting game.

POOL

Producer: Abrasco, 48K £6.95
Author: K Eaves
A sudden flurry of interest in Pool makes for some interesting comparisons. One of the newer ones is this version from Abrasco for two to eight players, with the option of playing a league. As usual, the cue ball is controlled by a small cursor dot — in this case the cue ball travels towards the cursor, which is controlled by use of the cursor keys (slow and fine tuning) or the zero key for fast positioning. A very clear strength bar indicator is used to determine the distance the cue ball will travel, and is positioned with keys 5 or 8 (min/max). Considering the limitations of the Spectrum and TV screens generally, the graphics are quite good and the movement of the balls is convincingly accurate though terribly busy. Game rules are a close copy of the real game, the balls are marked as spots or stripes and you lose a turn for a foul shot. Good.

POOL

Producer: Bug-Byte, 16K £5.95
This version is unusual in that the cue ball cursor may be placed anywhere on the table, which allows for greater control over the shot. On the other hand this is not a very close copy of the real game. In addition to the cue ball, there are six other numbered balls (you score the value of the potted ball) and each of the two players takes it turn, playing through until all the balls have been potted or he has missed three consecutive pots, or potted the cue ball. In this sense the game is a bit limited. The graphics are clear although more use of colour could have been made — all the balls are red, but much bigger than in the Abrasco version. Practice probably makes perfect, for it isn't as easy to play as it looks.

POOL

Producer: CDS, 16K £5.95
Author: Mike Lamb
CDS have done very well with this version. It isn't a classic stripe or spot game. There are six balls, three red, three blue. The cursor moves round the edge of the table with key S, picking up speed as it goes. A 4-block bar indicator is used for strength of shot, a sensible arrangement where each key stroke adds a block. The graphics are very good, with neat movement and perhaps the best stopping effect of any of the pool/snooker games available. One or two player games, scoring and hi-score. Good value. Machine code.

SNOOKER

Producer: Artic, 16K £5.95
With the minimum space devoted to score lines or embellishments, Artic have produced about the biggest playing table for their game, which is a classic six colour, nine red ball. Instead of a moving cursor, the cue ball radiates a direction indicator line controlled by the cursor keys, and the strength of shot is given by using keys A to Z. The table is correctly marked with D and spots. Balls pocketed appear in a green band at the base of screen and the score is automatically kept and displayed at the base of the table. The ball colours work quite well and the movement is reasonably smooth, although the balls do stop very suddenly. Machine code.

STAR SOCCER

Producer: Watson, 16K £5.95
This is a quite different football game from Football Manager by Addictive, and is really a computer version of those old football games where you controlled your men with rods and handles. It's designed for two players, but since you need much of the keyboard, quick change overs are essential! After loading you are presented with a Super League of eight well known teams and a league scoring table. Having decided which team each is to play, the two opponents may select a playing formation; 3-2-5; 4-2-4; 4-3-3; or 4-4-2. The playing field now appears with all the numbered players of each side set up ready for the kick off. The 'players' are not animated figures, but numbererd squares, unlike the well-known Atari version. Passing the ball is done by selecting the player's number to whom you want to pass, and the game rattles along with both sides attempting to tackle, intercept and score goals. Goal kicks and corners are featured but not side throws. This is highly addictive to play — it could even be the end of football as we know it.

TEST MATCH

Producer: CRL, 48K £6.95
This game should bowl over all cricket fans (non-fans will find it all double-dutch). Fast action with no wait times makes it a speeded up version of the real thing. Participation is very limited, however; you're allowed to select the bowlers in your team and order the batsmen, but from then on the game runs itself automatically. Only in the event of a good midfield shot do you have to sit up and decide whether the bastmen should risk a run or not. In fact the odds seem pretty good since the fielders are not very accurate long shots at wicket. Features howzzats of bowled, caught, run out, lbw, and follows real cricket very closely with the exception of Australian beer cans on the pitch.

SIMULATIONS

Under our headings a Simulation Game is one which conforms to the definition that it attempts to simulate real situations of a mechanical nature, and that part of the game is to use instrument displays to control the game as well as usual visual guides.

ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE

Producer: Temptation, 48K £5.95 (1)
Author: Simon Mansfield
Set in the South Atlantic during the Second World War, this game recreates the actions of the German pocket battleship Graf Spee. The aim is to sink allied merchant shipping and survive attacks by allied battleships. 2 screens provide you, as Captain, with a sea map of the Atlantic and indicate your position and that of enemy shipping. You can direct your ship towards the enemy, and when close enough, change to a sea level view ready to engage with either guns or torpedoes. Instruments show you your speed, heading, enemy position and distance in yards. On sighting the enemy, his ship appears gradually above the horizon. If armed, it begins firing back. A serious drawback is that to keep the enemy in your gun sights you actually have to come to a stop — not very realistic. The option menu for controlling your ship is also extremely finicky. Average block character graphics, good sound and use of colour, 7 skill levels. Okay for its type. Overall CRASH rating 54%. BASIC.

AIRLINER

Producer: Protek, 16K £5.95
Take command of a modern BAC 1-11 jet airliner and land it safely at Edinburgh airport. You can also take off and land at a second airport. The controls are necessarily simplified from the real things, but they are complicated enough and some knowledge of how big jets actually fly helps. There is no view through the cockpit window unless you are on a correct flight approach path, when the runway lights will appear. Extensive instructions look daunting, but are worth digesting so that you don't have to panic at the last minute. Operates in real time, but things happen quickly when the airport is approached! Sensible, clear graphics, reasonable control responses, all in all an absorbing game.

FLIGHT SIMULATION

Producer: Psion, 48K £7.95
An early Spectrum program, and always popular, this simulates the effects of flying a single seater light aircraft, including landing and taking off. There are 2 airfields (one very difficult and surrounded by hills), lakes, beacons and a very good map of the whole area. It takes many minutes to fly over the whole map. Instrument flying is essential to success and, as usual, there is a lot of accompanying instruction to digest. The cockpit view is simple but oddly realistic. If you enjoy contemplative games, then this is still one of the best, although watch out for some oddities if you try looping the loop — the program doesn't seem to cope with that!

THE FOREST

Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £9.95 (1)
Author: Graham T. Relph
An amazing program which simulates the sport of orienteering — yet manages to be much more than a sport simulation. An enormous area of geography is enclosed in the program, only a tiny bit of it already mapped for you. Included is a 12 point orienteering course for you to complete in the shortest possible time, checking each point in the correct sequence. The display shows you the terrain six metres in front and uses symbols for the different terrain, trees, shrubs, lakes, towns etc. Special point features are displayed as messages and an eye level indicator tells you whether the ground is falling or rising, so you can easily follow the contours. In addition you can go off and chart the unmapped areas. The program will draw contour and terrain maps for you or make up 3D views. A massive program, excellent value, recommended. Overall CRASH rating 88%. M/C and BASIC.

HEATHROW – ATC

Producer: Hewson Consultants, 16K £7.95
Author: Mike Male
If you get a little queasy flying, you could always have a go on the ground as an air traffic controller — in this case at the busy Heathrow airport. You must direct incoming flights from the holding stacks safely onto the runway. Your instruments include radar, showing the aircraft call signs, blips and trails; displays giving the altitude and bearing, heading and speed and size of the aircraft. There are 7 levels of play including a demo mode, and you can progress to handling mixed traffic, restricted airspace and outbound flights, as well as cope with emergencies like unknown aircraft intruding, radio failure, loss of runway and on board instrument failure. After this you'll never fly again! Recommended.

HUNTER-KILLER

Producer: Protek, 48K £7.95 (1)
Author: Rod Hopkins
This is a submarine simulation game set off the coast of German Helegoland (North Sea) during the Second World War. You are commander of an 'S' type submarine and your mission is to find an enemy sub in the same area and hunt it down. Sailing too close to the coast may result in your hitting a mine or running aground. 3 screens show you the control room, the chart room and the periscope view of the surface. The instrumentation is quite complex, including ballast indicator, hydroplanes, battery charge, engine speed, rudder angle, heading, asdic, echo sounder and much more. In the periscope you may see enemy shipping and enemy aircraft which will hunt you if you stay on the surface too long. Under water you use electric engines and recharge the batteries on the surface, when you use a diesel engine. The accompanying booklet is very detailed and essential reading. Good graphics and realistic sound, real time operation. Overall CRASH rating 61%. BASIC and M/C.

NIGHTFLITE 2

Producer: Hewson Consultants, 16K £7.95
Author: Mike Male
Drastically upgraded from their original 'Nightflite', this flying simulation allows you to pilot a light aircraft at night, taking off and landing or do acrobatics. New features are a shifting perspective which allows you to see the correct view of the runway lights from whatever angle you approach the airport, many more lights from surrounding hamlets, and a realistic changing engine noise depending on speed. Instrumentation is complex and includes variable flap controls. 7 modes of operation including two auto-pilot modes and a training mode, and 6 difficulty levels. After-flight debrief feature and certificate print-out. 100% M/C.

STRIKE ATTACK

Producer: Micromart, 48K £6.95
The scenario promises an excellent game — your mission as a Phantom pilot is to penetrate enemy territory and bomb a specified target. Stacked against you are AA artillery, SAM missiles and enemy fighters. Entry point is at 70 miles, 10,000 feet, 90% rpm, 400 knots and 90 degree heading. Chances of attack depend on the flightpath — below 2,000 feet there's only a 10% chance of attack, which is still very frequent. The technique for avoiding total oblivion is to break (hard turn) at 4 or 6 gees and change altitude rapidly to avoid missiles. If you stick to the rules in the 12 page manual you will be able to escape every attack. The display shows a 'radar' picture with you in the centre, target to be bombed, and enemy positions. There are also details like speed, heading, rate of climb, target distance and extra messages for enemy attack. The poor variation of attack and slow display speed (BASIC) and the not too exciting graphics are a bit of a let

down considering the potential, but if you are an enthusiast of RAF slang you may appreciate the extra messages as the program is written by a Fl. Lt. J T F Dyer.

STRATEGIES

'Strategy' says the dictionary, 'is Generalship, the art of war; management of an army or armies in a campaign – art of moving or disposing troops or ships so as to impose upon the enemy the place and time and conditions for fighting preferred by oneself.' The best strategy game attempt to simulate real conditions in a wide spectrum (ahem!) of activities, and ask you to manage your forces, whether they be armies old and new, or an awkward work force. Most computer versions are lengthy games, so it's important to be able to 'save' them for another convenient time.

AIRLINE

Producer: CCS, 16/48K, £5/6.00
Start off with £3 million and turn in into £30 million and take over British Airways. Hijacks, strikes, crashes and rising fuel costs all take their toll. If you enjoy strategy games revolving around empire building, then CCS are the people for you. Clear text and illustration graphics. Good value for money.

APOCALYPSE

Producer: Red Shift, 48K £9.95
'Apocalypse' is a game of nuclear devastation. It's a long two-sided load and a game for 1-4 players. It can take between four hours and four years to play and if you outgrow the scenario, Red Shift have others to add on. A large selection of maps allows the action to take place anywhere and at almost any period. You set up the empires, their centres, their armies and weaponry. This is a very flexible game of real war strategy which should keep the addict going for a long, long time. Very good value.

AUTOCHEF

Producer: CCS, 16/48K £5/£6.00
You have a million in capital and must increase this to 25 million in the shortest possible time. The problems you must cope with include wary shareholders who are watching your every move, assessing your performance and who may even force you to resign if you're not doing well. Inflation, a sluggish economy and copious strikes are other problems you will face in this lively strategy from CCS. It's all very well eating fast food, but how fast is the money?

BARON

Producer: Temptation, 48K £5.95
Author: Simon Mansfield
The game is for 2 to 4 players and takes you back to medieval times (apart from one noted anachronism). At the start of the game each player is awarded a castle, lands, workers and money in the form of 'dubloons'. The object is to plant your acreage, feed your workers, hire mercenaries (and feed them), buy them weapons and raid your neighbouring barons to take money, slaves and land. Slaves are useful because they do as much work as your workers but only eat half as much food. The weapons your mercenaries carry depend on what you spend and can include lasers (?) There are natural disasters to contend with like plague and rats, and if you feed your workers generously they'll give birth to babies. Games of between 5 and 55 moves may be pre-selected, the winner being the most powerful baron at the end of the slected number of moves. There are no graphics to speak of and the response times are quite long. Overall CRASH rating 48% if you're in a group. BASIC.

BRITISH LOWLAND

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
Author: K A Wells
If you've ever thought about putting the British car industry back on its feet, here's your chance! You are the Chairman of a small sports car company, and by careful management you must accumulate a bank balance of £1,500,000. At the start you are presented with a bar chart showing the last 6 months production, histogram showing days lost over last 6 months, a status report, and a bank account and profit/loss account for each month. From then on a monthly option menu allows you to: open a new production line, close one, raise the prices of cars, lower them, or continue on with the other problems in hand. These include annual pay negotiations, industrial injury, a wide range of union demands like longer tea breaks and shorter working hours, and discipline problems like pilfering. The game offers a wide range of strategic options and takes into account the morale of your workforce if you are too autocratic. Good, clear text graphics back up the well thought out program.

CORN CROPPER

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
Okay cornballs, time to get your hands dirty down on your 30 acre farm! There's the buying of seed crop to do, ploughing, planting, irrigating, harvesting, storing, hiring of hands, spraying the bugs and keeping an eye on the bank balance. Weather plays an important part, and as usual with these games life just isn't a doddle. Good, clear and colourful graphics.

DALLAS

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
The name of the city has become synonymous with oil and JR. The object is to take over the Ewing Empire or be taken over by them if you lose. A map of the Dallas area is divided into a grid and you are offered the option of buying up likely sites for drilling. You can do surveys before or after buying, move rigs to the site, drill, set up production and build pipe lines. The more successful you are the more likely you are to be hit by sabotage and other disasters. Oil prices fluctuate all the while, affecting your revenues. A good strategy game on the whole, although the random elements do seem to intrude too effectively.

DICTATOR

Producer: DK Tronics, 48K £4.95
One of the best early games from DK. You've just become President of Ritimba, an equatorial banana republic. Your reign will be brief and unenviable. How long can you survive your greedy and hated secret police, bullying army, irritating guerillas, bothersome commies, snot-nose landlowners and revolting peasants? Money may be borrowed from the Russians or Americans (if they feel like it). As the game progresses the options run short. Can you make it to a wealthy exile or will you die at your post? Recommended.

EVEREST ASCENT

Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50

You have 20 days to reach the summit of Everest, starting off with limited funds (money comes in from sponsors if you seem to be doing well, but it isn't credited to you if you've forgotten to buy a radio). You must hire Sherpas with homely names and varying strengths and the habit of deserting you if you're not fed properly. Their equipment and supplies are expensive and they eat like horses. Neat graphics and the familiar prompt menu for buying and moving about. It takes some getting into and early expeditions usually last a short time until you realise what's needed most. A good average.

GANGSTERS!

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00 (1)
Author: P Boulton

The object of this amusing game is to become top dog of Spectral City. You're gang leader up against 4 other rival gangs trying to own the city through operating speakeasies, distilleries, casinos and brothels. This can be done by buying up various joints, raiding those of your rivals, bribing the appropriate authorities, assassinating your rival gang leaders and generally carrying on like an utter rotter. The success of your gang will rely heavily on their numbers, equipment and morale, all of which must be carefully regulated. The game follows the traditional strategy formula of option menus and results. The Moral Majority are unlikely to approve! Good value. Overall CRASH rating 59%. Offers 9 skill levels. BASIC.

GREAT BRITAIN LTD

Producer: Simon Hessel, 48K £6.95

You are Prime Minister of Great Britain and your aim is to stay in power as long as you can. Having chosen which party you wish to represent you are presented with the state of the nation, the rate of inflation, unemployment rate, exchange rate for the pound and dollar, your popularity rating, nation's balance at the bank and so on. Factors taken into account are population figures and relationship of OAPs to children, number of compnies in business, tax income from various sources, expenditure for the previous year, and the prices of commodities. The general aim is to work towards the General Election and win it. A highly complex program which takes you to the thrills of Election Night — and beyond (if you're a success). Recommended.

GENERAL ELECTION

Producer: Buy-Byte, 48K £6.95
Author: I Wason and D Wolff

The object is to win more seats in parliament than your opposition (it's a realistic simulation anyway). There are 100 constituencies split up into five regions. In each region seats are graded as Very Safe, Safe, Marginal or Very Marginal. From the title card of Maggie shouting the game's title, it's all go. Unfortunately so much of the game is a dice-throwing board game and it's beset by piles of confusing instructions as complex as an explanation of Einstein's relativity laws. In the end, rather boring to play.

INHERITANCE

Producer: Simon Hessel, 48K £6.95

This is a two part game. Great Uncle Arbuthnot is dead and you inherit his entire estate, but first you must prove your financial acumen by turning £10,000 into £100,000 in 26 weeks by investing on the stock market and the Metal Exchange. You can also gamble at the casino or at the races. Only on completing part one can you load part two; here you have got the manor house plus its ailing soft drinks factory. The aim is to find the secret formula for Paradise Cola and successfully market the drink whilst coping with fires, strikes and frauds. The game is all text but it moves at a lively pace and is playable from the start.

JERICHO 2

Producer: Elephant, 48K £5.55

A text strategy game in which you, as Joshua, have a go at bringing down the walls of Jericho. You are provided with certain siege implements like ballistae, battering rams, towers and carts, plus 300 men. The art is to assign men to particular tasks while juggling with the necessities of building further siege engines, gathering the material for them, keeping food supplies up and attacking the weak points of the walled city. Unfed men desert — it's a tough life.

JIGSAW

Producer: Artic, 48K, £5.95

As the title says, this is a computer jigsaw puzzle. The program contains 2 pictures, an old steam train and St George and the Dragon. Both graphics are very nicely done and can be seen for a flash during the loading, or on pressing the Help key. During play the pictures are divided up into squares and muddled up. You use the cursor keys to shuffle them into the correct sequences. Depending on the selected skill level there are more or less squares to shuffle. Our reviewers found the game amusing and difficult at first, but unable to hold the attention for long. Overall CRASH rating 47%. A game with a difference and likely to appeal to puzzlers.

JOHNNY REB

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50

Lothlorien specialise in battle strategy war games which require hours to play properly, involving military units of varying strengths and related weaponry. Each player in turn is allowed to move some or all of his units their pre-ordained number of squares, and then use them to attack. The game is set in the American Civil War and the idea is to capture the enemy unit's flag. The graphics tend to be small to fit in everything and it takes some time to get the hang of how to play, but once that's done there's hours of fun if you like war strategy games. It has proved very popular.

LOJIX

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: Stephen Webb

This is a puzzle game where the object is to fit 22 irregularly shaped pieces into a square shaped grid. On the left is the blank grid, and to the right the 22 vari-coloured shapes, each identified by a letter of the alphabet. To fit a piece you select the one you want by pressing the appropriate key, whereupon a black cursor dot appears in the grid which can be moved by using the cursors to the centre of where you want the shape fitted (this is the grid square which corresponds to the square in the shape where its identifying letter is situated). The shape may be rotated before fitting using key 9. It may also be removed from the grid by using key R. Looks simple but is likely to take a player a long time to sort out and if you like these puzzles, offers good value. Overall CRASH rating 53%. M/C.

LOST

Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: John Hunt

Lost is a graphics survival adventure. You are lost in a forest clearing, surrounded by mountains with only 5 days supply of food. There are animals and snakes which pop up now and again and may be killed if you're quick enough off the mark — or they may get you. A complex list of graphic symbols at the start tells you what you are seeing, fruit trees, caves, water, settlements etc. You can move 4 characters at a time, but this allowance decreases over poor terrain. Weather plays an important role and between each move the weather forecast is displayed. This is built up so slowly it renders the game almost unplayable after a few minutes. Colour, graphics and sound are all quite well though out, but in the end it becomes more baffling than enjoyable. Keyboard response is poor, no joystick option general rating: average. CRASH overall 57%. BASIC.

PARAS

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50

If you enjoyed 'Redweed' or 'Johnny Reb' then you will find Paras a suitable follow up. The object is to bring the war to a swift close by destroying the enemy's line of communication — a bridge. To do this your 15 men are dropped behind enemy lines. They may be equipped with 5 different weapons and an unlimited number of grenades. As in the previous war games each man may be moved according to a strict table of squares allowed, and then allowed to fire before the enemy get their turn. Unlike the 2 previous titles, Paras has far more complexities built in and will provide endless fun for war game addicts. Bright graphics, but many symbols to digest. Good instructions enclosed on a leaflet.

PLUNDER

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
Author: D G Evans

Plunder is a pretty massive strategy game where you find yourself in command of a British Galleon with the object of stopping the Spaniards from running gold from the New Lands to Spain. There is a short, medium and long game option with 3 skill levels for each. The screen gives you a high resolution map of the North Atlantic, divided into squares by a grid. You move your ship about with the cursors, seeking enemy galleons, troopships and battleships. If one is encountered you may attack or retreat. Attacking gives the option of firing or boarding or both. Firing on a galleon may be a mistake — if it sinks then you lose its gold. Depending on your battle success the morale factor of your crew goes up or down. There are several ports open to you which must be entered via an arcade style sequence for docking. In port you may take on extra crew or weaponry, have repairs made, buy food, jewels or opium, or sell if you already have any. The display informs you at all times of the gold stopped, gold acquired and spent, weather conditions (which affect finding enemy shippping), number of victories, men lost, ships sunk and so on. The length of the game is determined by the number of moves you make, and these are also displayed. All in all, an entertaining game, but one that can become repetitive with playing.

PRINT SHOP

Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00

Another standard from CCS in which you get only 12 weeks to make the profit which will stop the bank from closing down your printing business. Work scheduling, staffing, purchasing and estimating to clients for their work are aimed to test your business acumen to the hilt. Each month you receive a balance sheet to see how well you have done. This is a text game with option menus.

PRIVATEER

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £4.50

It's a good price but reflects the fact that this is an updated ZX81 program and looks like it. A 3-phase naval war game which gives you command of a Royal Navy ship fighting French Privateers. It is a suitable game for an introduction into the whole battle strategy area, but too simple for hardened veterans.

RED BARON

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50

This is a real time simulation of World War I plane to plane aerial combat with you, as the pilot of a Sopwith Camel, pitted against air aces of the German airforce. A main menu offers 6 options; Enemy plane spotting, which at length shows you what an enemy plane is doing graphically; Training flight, which familiarises you with the controls and graphic display; Level of play — there are 19; Campaign game, in which enemy planes are sent up against you; Design your own game, where you can alter the specifications of the planes and plots; and Quit. The main problem with what might be a really good game, is that the cockpit view is very disorienting. If an enemy is behind you, you get a view over the back of your plane, which doesn't seem very realistic — it's almost as though you were flying backwards, or sideways if you look left or right. Controlling your aircraft takes some getting used to and the real time element is likely to put off shoot em up addicts. However, for those who enjoy simulations, this one represents fairly good value for money.

REDWEED

Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50

A scenario borrowed from H G Wells puts you in charge of London's defence against the invading Martian war machines, whilst semi-sentient Redweed threatens to put your units out of action as it grows across the map. You have many and varied units from heavy artillery to flamethrowers (used against the redweed). Your enemy is three war machines and your task is to out think them. Small but effective graphics and a menu driven game where you and the Martians take your turns in a very civilised manner. Fifteen skill levels to test your tactical abilities. Good value for this popular game.



REFLECTIONS
Producer: Artic, 16K £5.95
Author: Brian Neenan
This is an original strategy/puzzle game where you must move a torch around the edges of a 12 by 12 grid and discover the locations of invisible mirrors by seeing where the torch beam is reflected. You can select between 10 and 39 mirrors. If the beam is reflected when 'fired' you may then elect to guess the cell in which the mirror is placed and then its angle. If you are wrong you lose points and you spend a point for every firing of the torch. The graphics are simple but effective and it requires quite a bit of thinking. Likely to pall with much playing however. Overall CRASH rating 50%. M/C.

ROMAN EMPIRE
Producer: MC Lothlorien, 16K £5.50
In this cast of thousands it is the first century BC and you are the Emperor. (A working knowledge of 'I Claudius' might be useful but isn't essential)! What you have to do is simply conquer ten countries which hate you, and do this wiping out their troops (under-paid and under-trained) with your 90,000 men. There are nine generals on your side, including yourself, and 18 legions of 5,000 men each. The idea is to build up armies from the men, appoint generals and launch campaigns to persuade the barbarian hordes how wonderful life under the yoke can be. Three levels of difficulty.

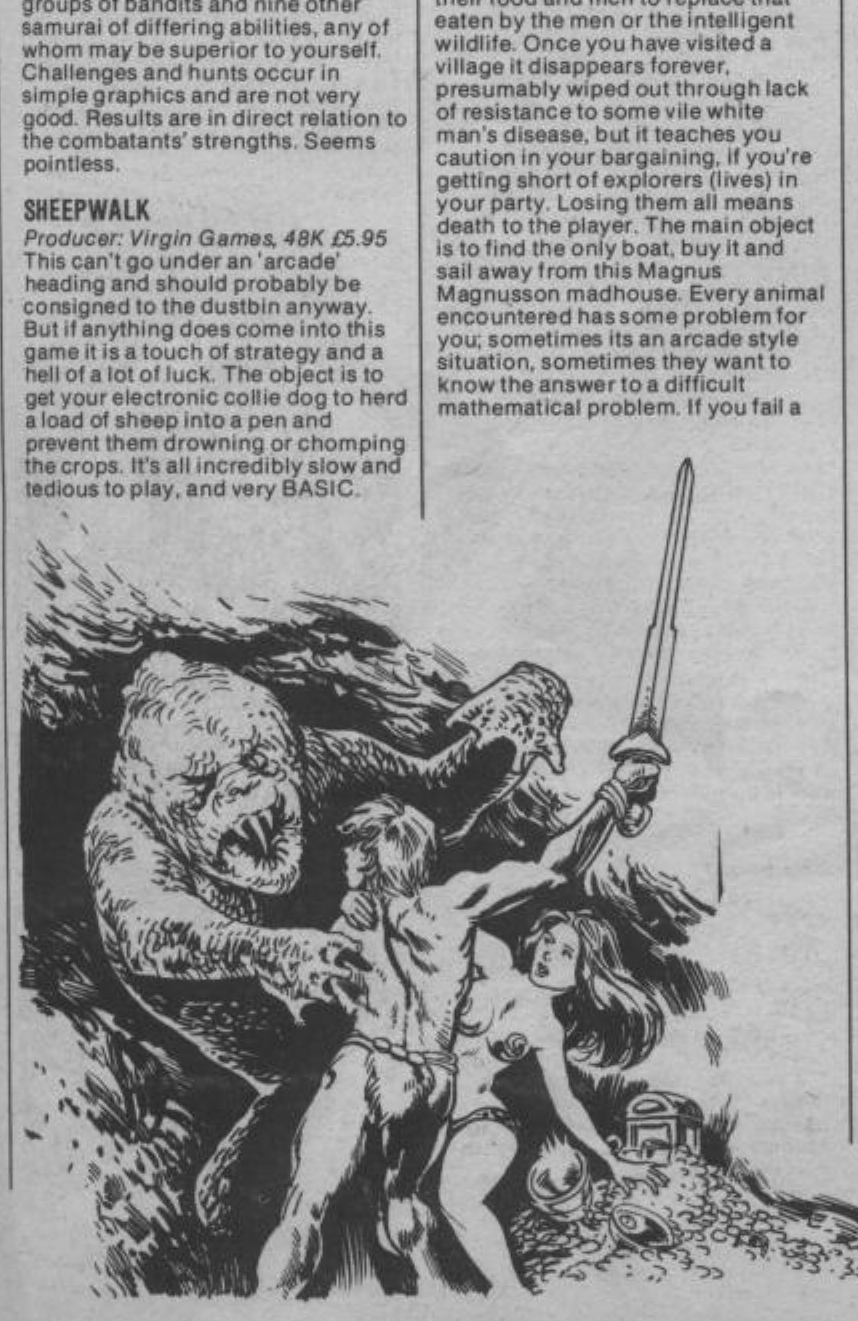
SAMURAI WARRIOR
Producer: MC Lothlorien, 16K £5.50
You are a Samurai warrior living during the Kamakura period in Japan (1185-1333). There are no bonus points for killing Richard Chamberlain, but there are for defeating your opponents and surviving into old age. You can, of course, commit Seppuku if you would rather. Up against you are six groups of bandits and nine other samurai of differing abilities, any of whom may be superior to yourself. Challenges and hunts occur in simple graphics and are not very good. Results are in direct relation to the combatants' strengths. Seems pointless.

SHEEPWALK
Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
This can't go under an 'arcade' heading and should probably be consigned to the dustbin anyway. But if anything does come into this game it is a touch of strategy and a hell of a lot of luck. The object is to get your electronic collie dog to herd a load of sheep into a pen and prevent them drowning or chomping the crops. It's all incredibly slow and tedious to play, and very BASIC.

SHIP OF THE LINE
Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50
You an officer in the Royal Navy or the 17th Century, in command of a ship of the line in the Mediterranean, and the object is to do battle with other ships in order to win favour with your superiors. The ship in question is a cutter with a crew of 50. Pressing any key gives you a graphic view of the sea. If a ship is sighted you may engage her or run. Should you engage you are told the enemy's strength. If you win the encounter you may sink the ship or it may surrender, in which case you win prize money. All in all a rather simple and undemanding game with few thrills.

SMUGGLER'S COVE
Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95
It's 1753 and you are on a hunt for Blackbeard's famous treasure, hidden in a complex of caves on the north Cornish Coast. The program burbles away at you in pirateese of the 'Argh, Jim lad, me scupper, there 'e be,' type. The top half of the screen contains well designed and instantly appearing location graphics, but the game gets nowhere. It seems impossible to get beyond the first few locations and then it ceases to be any fun.

SPECTRUM SAFARI
Producer: A J Rushton, 48K £5.95
I've been told that this game is now marketed by C D S Micro Systems, but they haven't confirmed that yet. In any event it is a jolly and original mixture of arcade bits with text/graphics adventure which should keep you on your toes unless you're a D&D purist. The idea is to take your party of stranded explorers across an island infested with highly intelligent wildlife with university degrees, and beset with natives who want to barter away their food and men to replace that eaten by the men or the intelligent wildlife. Once you have visited a village it disappears forever, presumably wiped out through lack of resistance to some vile white man's disease, but it teaches you caution in your bargaining, if you're getting short of explorers (lives) in your party. Losing them all means death to the player. The main object is to find the only boat, buy it and sail away from this Magnus Magnusson madhouse. Every animal encountered has some problem for you; sometimes its an arcade style situation, sometimes they want to know the answer to a difficult mathematical problem. If you fail a member of your party gets eaten. Nice clear graphics and a veritable MGM musical score makes this a very enjoyable game. Recommended.



SUPER SPY
Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50
Cross and recross the world in search of Dr Death's secret island lair. Full of coded messages and puzzles, mysterious packages, waitresses, hotel managers, taxi cab drivers and the like. Be wary of parcels and flowers that explode and watch out for Dr Death's horrid little midget. It could be a lively and fun game to play, but in the end it settles for mere confusion which tends to wear the player down. If you like this type of game, probably worth it.

TIMEQUEST
Producer: Midrogen, 48K £5.95
This is a game in which you must find the pieces of your craft which have been scattered throughout time owing to an accident in warp-space. Thorughout your quest you must defend yourself from the inhabitants of that time, such as a bunch of Roman soldiers in 137 AD. The screen displays your attackers, weapons you may pick up, and the salvagable bits of your craft as well as yourself. To the right is a status table and below a series of text options which are activated by pressing the desired initial letter. These options allow you to move across the screen, choose the direction, and attack, pick up, change weapons and so on. The game has very limited graphics and is neither arcade nor really an adventure. It claims to be in real time (a clock ticks away with every move made) but as it's staged across eons of time this is scarcely possible. Poor. Overall CRASH rating 33%. BASIC.

VALHALLA
Producer: Legend, 48K £14.95 (1)
Valhalla is much too lengthy and complicated to go into in a brief review. It boasts the best animated graphics in an adventure yet, numerous locations, lots and lots of inter-reactive characters who carry on with or without you, and kill each other off all over the place. Interrupt-operated text input allows you to type in commands while other actions are taking place and the program accepts quite complicated sentences. There are six separate but linked quests, although much fun may be had just living life as it comes in Valhalla. Accompanied by an excellent book which tells you all you need to know in no-nonsense language. Expensive but worth it, although there were mixed feelings about the ultimate value of the game's central objectives. OVerall CRASH rating 82%. M/C.

SMUGGLER
Producer: CCS, 48K £6.00
Author: P A Hainsworth
The inlay says that skill, inspiration and calculated risk are the main ingredients of success. Five levels of play allow you to move and store goods, buy goods, sell them, buy a boat, sail it, and consult the bank. It is the 19th century and the object is to amass a fortune of £250,000 by smuggling goods in from the Mediterranean (avoiding Ships of the Line). Factors to juggle with include crew costs, commodity costs, port dues, maintenance costs, size of vessel and how far it can safely travel and at what loading. Random elements include the weather, which may sink your vessel or run it aground, and there are always the priates to watch out for.

TYRANT OF ATHENS
Producer: MC Lothlorien, 16K £5.50
Another text strategy game from Lothlorien. It's the fifth century BC and Athens is beset by hostile armies and fleets from other powerful Greek states as well as the Persians. All you have to do is survive long enough to turn Athens into the most feared state in the Mediterranean by building warships, training troops and fighting battles by sea and by land. No mention of democracy here, and philosophy's strictly for the cissies. Not one of their best games, but reasonably playable.

WARLORD
Producer: MC Lothlorien, 48K £5.50
This might be seen as a sequel to 'Samurai Warrior' as it is set in the same country and the same period of time. You rule a small coastal village which supports itself by slave labour and by raiding other small villages. In turn your village may be raided by other villages or by the pirates off the coast. This is a considerably expanded game compared to 'Samurai Warrior'. Menu options allow you to train troops from your villagers, set some aside for land cultivation, hire mercenaries, attack pirates, raid other villages, hire samurai and build ships. Text only game. Average fun.

ADVENTURE GAMES

Adventure games come in all shapes and sizes. They are text-oriented, although graphics are often added, sometimes for a pretty effect, sometimes as an integral part of the game with clues not in the text. There are also an increasing number of 'graphic adventures' which combine the adventure format with arcade style graphics. They are all linked by the common theme of a quest, a search for some object or aim through many locations.

ABYSS
Producer: CCS, 48K £5.00
In a hidden gorge through the Mountain of the Golden Lion, lies the forgotten ABYSS. But brave and foolhardy adventurers like you sometimes strive to cross it, their sole aim to destroy the many evil monsters that lurk in the shadows, waiting for the next meal to come strolling across the many bridges in the ABYSS. Scenario over, the game begins. The screen presents you with a yellow grid, each crossing point being a 'lurking' place. Movement is done by the cursors until you encounter a monster. These tend to offer you a range of problems, like the Ogre who can't get his sums right—can you in 15 seconds? Or the arcade sequence where you must hit five falling spiders before they reach the cave floor. Added dangers are creaky bridges that may collabpse under you. By no means a traditional D&D adventure, but certainly one for quick thinking swots with 'O' levels to pass! Good value for the price and not at all easy.

BLACK CRYSTAL
Producer: Carnell, 48K £7.50
A mammoth undertaking and one of the earliest 'big' adventures. It features graphics filling most of the screen, showing a map of the various landscapes. Choose what character you want to be and then wade in to fight the monsters. Far too complex to do justice to in this

space, but if you are to play it set aside hours for contemplation of the book (or novel one might say) which explains everything. Indeed, you are recommended to save the game at various stages and think over the day's events before plunging in. Recommended.

BYTE
Producer: CCS, 48K £5.00 (1)
Author: O&S Ben-Ami
This is a text-with-some-graphics adventure, where the battle field is the depths of a 3D maze in which various computer components must be located to build your own computer. They may be lying about, they may be hidden and generally they are defended by all sorts of electronic monsters you must defeat to remain alive and progress. The seven skill levels are neatly categorised by the sophistication of the computer you want to build, each having its own strength characteristics. Battles with the monsters may take the form of mental bouts like spelling tests or maths questions, or they may be physical where, for instance, you may have to do semi-arcade battles with cross bows or swords. Graphically the text is pretty clear, but the inputting of commands is rather irritating and there's too much reverse flashing going on which tires the eye. Medium fast response times. Overall CRASH rating 58%, average. BASIC.

CAMELOT
CCS, 48K £5.00
Author: C Chapman & G Brooks
You are Arthur Pendragon, banished from Camelot by the wicked Black Knight, but an unknown ally has loaned you 50 bags of gold pieces. You must travel around and collect seven items that are hidden in various countries. Three baazars exist where you may buy items to help you, and there are other items hidden that may help you overcome problems. The object is to collect the seven items and re-enter Camelot to be crowned King. This is a graphics adventure where you move Arthur and his band of warriors around a map by using keys N,S,E,W. At each step the scene cuts to a graphic representing castles, towns and different types of landscape. In each there is some problem to overcome, like a band of brigands whom you may fight or flee. Battle strength and helpful objects already collected help determine the outcome. Should you win there is a search option for more useful items. The graphics are bright and clear, response times are fairly good and this unconventinal adventure might well make an attractive change from the usual.

COLOSSAL CAVES
Producer: C P Software, 48K £7.95
Author: Abersoft
Alsknown as Adventure 1 by Abersoft, this is a traditional style adventure where you must find the treasure left behind by a Wizard, and in which you will meet dragons, trolls, snakes and other dark denizens. When the program has finished loading the adventure begins instantly without instructions. These are available on command. The game is strictly text only and uses repeat locations when travelling along, say, a valley. Finding the cave in the first place is already an adventure in itself, and the whole game may take days, even weeks to complete satisfactorily. One of the classic computer adventure games. Recommended.

DEVILS OF THE DEEP
Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50
A 3D graphic adventure where you move your undersea diver along the sea bed avoiding electric eels and crabs, collect useful items like harpoon guns and harpoons, knives and compasses, and try to collect the treasure hidden somewhere. There are 100 screens to be traversed. The idea is a good one but the graphics are uninspiring and very, very slow. Long load and minutes to wait if you are killed before another game may be played. Below average.

DUNGEONS OF DOOM
Producer: Temptation, 48K £5.95
This is meant to contain two games —either you enter and progress down through the dungeons, or you start at the bottom and try to get out. I thought that it was generally the case with any adventure. It's meant to be a graphic adventure, but the graphics ar restricted to black on green squares representing the room you are in and the ones near to it. Monsters appear in text only and seem dispiritingly easy to kill off. Slow responses and few thrills make this a beginners-only introduction game.

ESPIONAGE ISLAND
Producer: Artic, 48K £6.95
Artic have produced five text only adventures to date, lettered A to E. This is 'D'. Despite or because of, the lack of pictures, all their adventures are dripping with verbal atmosphere. They contain endless locations, options, puzzles to solve and are never afraid of the most obscure or most obvious of solutions. Always excellent value. In this game you are on a reconnaissance flight to spy on an enemy island when you are hit by fire. The adventure begins in the plane as it plunges earthwards. There are many tangles with the parachute before you reach the ground — just grabbing it and opening the fuselage door results in a nasty red mess on the ground! From there on you must make your way to the heart of the enemy stronghold, secure information, and return to your aircraft carrier in disguise, avoiding being shot by your own side. Biggles lives again! Clear writing and fast responses combined with a variable element in replay, make this a very worthwhile buy. Save game feature.

FAUST'S FOLLY
Producer: Abbex, 16K £5.95
Faust's Folly is buried somewhere in this congenial game with fast response times and some graphic additions. Once you have sorted out the vocab and found the entrance to the underground complex, it's a matter of the correct implements being picked up. The computer tells you that it isn't very intelligent (whatever Sinclair may tell you) and it may not know which way is which without a compass to help. In almost any location you can go in eight directions, so don't get lost. Very good for 16K.

GHOST TOWN
Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: John Pickford
Ghost Town is a pretty accurate copy of Phipps Associates' 'Greedy Gulch', but it's nowhere near as much fun. There's the same old empty town with a sequential map showing the locations of the various establishments where useful items and information may be found to help you locate the gold mine in the desert. Once in the desert there don't seem to be any graphics worth speaking of. At least the text is nicely written and the response times are very good. But if I had to choose it would be 'Greedy Gulch'. Overall CRASH rating 43%. BASIC.

GOLDEN APPLE
Producer: Artic, 48K £6.95
Author: Simon Wadsworth
Adventure 'E' is the latest from Artic and its title card explains this text only adventure very well — a large mansion, a ship and a mountainous island in the distance. Looks easy until you start. The object is to find 13 secret objects, find a safe place to store them in and do this through tons of locations. Finding a key can be hard enough, but the key you need near the start of this game is hidden in a very obvious place — so obvious you would never think of looking there until you sneezed after sniffing the — no I musn't give any secrets away. Absorbing!

GREEDY GULCH
Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £4.95
The town of the title is a ghost town set in the Wild West, deserted now the gold workings have run out. But there is a mine out in the neighbouring desert which still has a fortune tucked away. The problem is to find the right map, get something to carry water in and fill it, find a gun for protection and then get to the mine and back. Whilst not a massively demanding adventure, it's certainly an absorbing one. The graphics show you the map of Greedy Gulch itself, or parts of it, with some location graphics in the desert. There are several mysterious appearances by someone you only see out of the corner of your eye. Some problems are simpler to overcome than you might suppose —confronted by a crevass and carrying a plank which wouldn't bridge it, jumping across solved the problem! Good value.

GROUCHO
Producer: Automata, 84K £10.00 (1)
Author: Piman
The full title of this ditty is, 'My Name Is Uncle Groucho You Win A Fat Cigar,' but that's much to long to ever repeat again! Like their famous Pimania, the object is to wade through a drug-induced landscape of weirdness and insanity, which is supposed to represent America, in the company of Groucho Marx and his companion the Piman, discover the secret identity of a famous Hollywood star which is hidden in the game, and then win the fabulous prize of a trip to Hollywood to meet the star in question, flying out on Concorde and coming back on the QE2. A rags to riches story for someone. Entries before 1 June. Naturally, you've got to be solid bonkers to get it right, and a pimaniac to boot. Good fun despite the slow response times. Excellent graphics and sound. Overall CRASH rating 67%. BASIC.

HOBBIT
Producer: Melbourne House, 48K £14.95
To date the great adventure, based on the famous Tolkien novel of the same name, which is included for the price. This game has a largish vocabulary and allows sentence with link words. Artificial intelligence of a kind enlivens the action as the characters continue their lives regardless of what you do. It's possible to inter-relate with them to some degree, depending on their feelings towards you. Some even get killed without you knowing about it until you stumble across their bodies! I've forgotten what the quest is, but it's hardly important — playing the game is. Very long and totally absorbing. A classic.

HUMMER HOUSE OF HORROR
Producer: Lasersound, 48K £7.00
Clouds obscure the moon and you are alone in the dreadful house — or are you? No you are not alone, there's the mad Chinese cook in the greasy kitchen for a start off, plus imps, ghouls and things that go bump in the night. Every room is seething with something or someone who wants you to pass something on to someone or something. Simple 3D graphics try to enliven the rather ponderous pace. Average fun.

INCA CURSE
Producer: Artic, 48K £6.95
This is adventure 'B', well up to Artic's usual standard of text only games. You are in the South American jungle, near an, as yet, undisturbed Inca Temple. Inside there is a lot of treasure which you must find and bring safely out. Being an Indiana Jones may be of some help, but pitting your brains against the evils therein is more important. Recommended.



INVINCIBLE ISLAND
Producer: Richard Shepherd, 48K £6.50
Author: P Cooke
Invincible Island is the home of the primitive Xaro tribe. Legend has it (as they often will) that the Xaro guard unimaginable treasures. Your only help is the last message of world famous explorer Dr Chumley who said, 'First find the seven parchments of Xaro'. He was never heard from again. Now it's your turn. Programs from this company always seem to take an age to load. When it has you are presented with a nice clear text and neat location graphics. Reasonably fast responses.

THE ISLAND
Producer: Virgin Games, 48K £5.95
Author: Martyn Davies
Apparently you live in a clutch of South Sea Islands, one of which contains gold. Find the map, find the correct island and get rich quick. A mostly text adventure with arcade sequences to add to the fun—that's the idea—the reality is something else. It's had one good review we've seen, but goodness knows why! This isn't a real adventure at all in the proper sense. You're led by the nose along the correct guessing path until you end up with an impossible arcade sequence which demands you sail your ship through a rock-infested sea. Deviation from the author's intended path results in terminating the game. Excellent response tiems to nowhere. Sorry, it's rubbish. Overall CRASH rating below 20%. M/C.

KNIGHT'S QUEST
Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £5.95
Which Micro's reviewers got very angry about this game, because it is written in BASIC. Lots of adventure games are written in BASIC and are very good, if a little slow at times. The plot of Knight's Quest is a little thin and unoriginal however, a forerunner of their much better games. Some locations are simply illustrated with small graphics and there are the usual assortment of spells, weapons and monsters. Not all bad by any means.

MAD MARTHA
Producer: Mikrogen: 48K £6.95
To prove how much fun a BASIC written adventure can be try this little domestic ditty. As hen-pecked husband, Henry, steal your wife's money, creep out of the house without waking baby or tripping over the wailing moggy, and have a night out on the town at the casino and other similarly Unsavoury Places. The problem is that your wife, dear Martha, is an escapee from Friday the 13th Part Six 4D, a homicidal maniac with an axe! Good vocabulary and an invariable program that resembles a word maze. Getting things in absolutely the correct order is the name of the game here. But if you are too clever there are very tricky little arcade sequences included. To purists these may be upsetting, but they do liven up the adventure. If you have tried Mad Martha and enjoyed it then try...

MAD MARTHA II
Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £6.95
Much the same mix as before, except this time Henry, Martha and son are on holiday in Spain. Martha has a half-cousin, a waiter called (wait for it) Manuel. Martha sets out on a bus tour with her son, leaving Manuel to keep an eye on Henry, who has a secret rendezvous with a Spanish penpal. Henry leaves their hotel with Manuel hot on his trail. Features a bull fight with Henry as a the star attraction. Not to be missed!

MAGIC MOUNTAIN
Producer: Phipps Associates, 48K £4.95
Seek out the Scroll of Wisdom in this text adventure with location graphics. There is the usual assortment of items and monsters, baffling puzzles and sudden deaths through inexperience. Reasonable graphics and medium fast response times. An average effort.

MINES OF SATURN
Producer: Mikrogen, 16K £5.95
Includes part two — Return to Earth. You're making a routine orbit of Saturn when a radiation storm forces you to crash land on one of the moons. Luckily you come down near an abandoned mining base. Now you must set off in search of Di-Lithium crystals to refuel your standard ship. 'Return to Earth' gets you back in space and landing on an abandoned and damaged space station, looking for a means of communicating with Earth. Both adventures are very standard, with not many locations and irritating random elements over which you have no control. The games lack atmosphere and will not accept abbreviations making you type everything out. Tedious.

MINES OF MORIA
Producer: Severn, 16K £4.95
The Mines of Moria are the ancient home of Durin's folk from Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. Long deserted, the mines contain old hoards of jewels and gold, guarded by the ancient and evil terrors of earlier ages. You're inside — the problem is getting out alive. Monsters include Trolls, Orcs, Balrogs or Wargs. Doors can be opened by force, spells or bribery of the door wards. Spells can be bargained for from wizards, and traders sell you wound ointment. Control is by the cursor keys, you can go up and down or use a warp which transports to other locations on a random floor. Watch out for the two-part load. The game itself is a mix. The screen shows you a plan of the floor with a list which lets you know the level you are on and room number occupied, weaponry and armorial status, number of wounds, strength, gold collected, jewels collected and spells available. A line at the bottom informs you of what's going on and asks whether or not to fight on meeting monsters. Rooms visited are plotted on the map, showing monsters encountered. It becomes difficult to manoeuvre after a while. A reasonable game.

THE ORACLE'S CAVE
Producer: DORIC, 48K £7.95 (1)
Author: Chris Dorrell
Using the classic D&D format, this is an animated graphics adventure. You must seek the entrance to the caves in which you are trapped, collecting 40 units of treasure on your way. You must also collect treasure guarded by four special monsters, The Mummy, The Centaur, The Fiery Dragon or The Black Knight. With each game the layout of the caves is randomly generated to make each play different from the last. Commands are entered in resonse to a menu of limited options which allow you to move, rest, explore, use (a carried article) or, if in the presence of a monster, fight or run. If you elect to move the menu is replaced by another offering left/right/up/down. When 'you' move there is an animation sequence which is very well done, expecially the descent of stairs. The fights are fun, but you must watch your combat strength and that of your opponent very carefully. Another point is to use the explore facility all the while. The game grows on you as you begin to realise its potential. Reasonable response times, good graphics and good value for money. Overall CRASH rating 70%. BASIC.

PHARAOH'S TOMB
Producer: Phipps Associates: 48K £4.95
Make yourself rich by plundering a luxurious Pharaoh's tomb. Phipps have put together a well planned and sometimes amusing adventure game here, with text and location graphics, which are simply but attractive. Responses are very fast and the atmosphere draws you in again and again. Good value for money and well worth playing.

PIMANIA
Producer: Automata, 48K £10.00
There's not much to be said about Pimania, the game that launched overnight the insignificant Pi Man to fame and fortune. The game is wacky, daft, weird and infuriating by turns and to date the famous prize worth £6,000 (plus index linking) has not been won. Although it runs on standard adventure game lines it takes lateral thinking into the realms of higher (or perhaps camp) art. Slow responses but that hardly matters, Pimania is a disease which overcomes most things!

PLANET OF DEATH
Producer: Artic, 16K £6.95
Adventure 'A' finds you stranded on an alien planet and you must find your space ship. That's a pretty straightforward quest for once, but the route is far from straightforward. Atmospheric and chilling to play, you get drawn in by the words. Plenty of hazards to overcome. Good value.

QUEST
Producer: Hewson, 48K £5.95
Find a map hidden in a world inhabited by gruesome monsters guarding their territory and various pieces of treasure. To undertake the quest in question you can choose to be a wizard, a cleric, rogue, fighter or simpleton, each with his own characteristics and abilities. A split text/graphic game, it has a reasonably wide range of vocabulary. Generally a very good game and a traditional format adventure with plenty of scope. The only serious drawback is that you can't play another game. Once finished the program quits permanently.

SAS ASSAULT
Producer: Mikrogen, 48K £6.95
In this text and some graphics adventure you are leading an SAS team who must recover the Russian Ambasador from kidnappers before the Russians take the matter as an act of war. The Russian is being held in a farmhouse and part one is the assault. Part two, on the reverse side of the tape, carries the action forward with your ratings dependent upon how well you did in part one. It all moves along at a fair pace, with text descriptions and prompts as to the weapons you carry and how many bursts you can fire. When a situation develops you are given lettered choices like 'Go back' or 'Fire' or 'Wait'. In between there are line drawings and some maps but most of the action is reported by the computer along the 'You hit one and killed him,' lines. Pretty fast responses, a lively story and generally not bad value. Overall CRASH rating 56% M/C.

SHIP OF DOOM
Producer: Artic, 48K £6.95
Adventure 'C' takes you into space and on a reconnaissance trip your ship is drawn by a Graviton beam onto an alien cruiser. Fred, your pet android, informs you that the cruiser is in search of humanoid planets to capture slaves whose brains will be replaced by microchips. The quest is to find the computer room and press the button to switch it off. You want to be wary in an Artic adventure, however, of switching off too many computers should you come across them. In 'Planet of Death' there is a computer which you may be tempted to disconnect. Doing so will dump you into a Sinclair Research logo!

VAMPIRE VILLAGE
Producer: Terminal, 48K £6.95 (1)
This graphics adventure is so graphics-oriented there is hardly any text to contend with. The village of Vlasdorf lives under the shadow of the vampire's castle, and as Mayor of the village you must find volunteers, provide them with money to buy equipment and food, and get them to help you destroy the vampire menace. Usual vampire rules apply—stakes through the heart, no flying by day, garlic keeps him at bay. The screen displays a map of Vlasdorf and the surrounding countryside with hosts of black shapes for buildings. You control your volunteer by the cursor keys—he's a small black dot—and you can send him to shops to buy things (like garlic), the boat house for a boat to cross the river (they drown if they fall in), the church for holy water, and so on. The village operates in real time moving from day to night with the usual rapidity of all good horror films! An unusual game with many other features and reasonable value for money. Overall CRASH rating 64%. M/C.

VELNOR'S LAIR
Producer: Quicksilva, 48K £6.95
Author: Derek Brewster
No adventure anthology would be complete without this one. Text only, but fluid, copious text with fast response times and a sense of humour that takes some of the sting from the gruesome tale of terror which lurks within the complex of Velnor's Lair. There's a clever use of repeat locations which makes you think you aren't getting anywhere, when in fact you must keep entering the same command for five or six steps. The denizens of this adventure are a monstrous lot, and the goblins are tricky indeed. Chose your character carefully, wizard, warrior or priest, and watch out for illusions, which abound. Highly recommended.





CRASH HOTLINE

Whether you phone-in or write in, all the names will go into the bag to be drawn monthly. First out of the bag receives £10 worth of software of your choice plus three issues of CRASH for the next three months; and three runners-up will each receive three free issues of CRASH for the next three months. (Should you be a subscriber, then your subscription will be extended for three months).

The **CRASH HOTLINE** is your **Top 20** chart of Spectrum software — so make sure you register your vote now! There's two ways you can do it: either use the **Crash Hotline Phone-in** (the number is printed below); or use the postal coupon below and send it to us.

Each month the results of your votes will be collated and published in the next month's issue of **CRASH** as the Top 20 programs voted on by readers.

YOUR VOTE IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT — USE IT PLEASE!

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Method 1
CRASH HOTLINE PHONE-IN. Ring the number below. We have had to install an answering machine. After the recorded message state your name and address very clearly, spelling it out if necessary (if it's an unusual name!) and then state the five games, with producers' names, starting with number 1 down to number 5. Please do this as quickly as possible.

THE CRASH HOTLINE PHONE NUMBER IS 0584 (Ludlow) 3015

Method 2
CRASH HOTLINE WRITE-IN. Use the coupon below, making sure you fill in all the details very clearly. Pop the coupon in a stamped envelope and send it to us at the address on the coupon.

DEADLINE
Votes for the next issue must be received no later than Wednesday 29th. February. Votes received after that date will go forward to next month's issue.

If you use the phone-in Hotline, you may have to bear with us — it's already proving very popular, which means you may well find it engaged when you ring. Try again later, and if all fails use the write-in coupon for safety.

Well, here it is, Britain's first software Hotline Chart compiled from your votes! However — a wrod of warning — due to print schedules this month's chart has had to be compiled after only two weeks and, as yet, the system isn't in full swing. Next month's chart will have had a full 4 weeks of vote collecting and will therefore be more representative. It means that the lower chart positions as shown here should be taken only as an indication rather than as gospel!

CRASH HOTLINE SPECTRUM SOFTWARE CHART — MARCH

Figure in brackets indicates last month's position

1	*(23)*	**MANIC MINER** Software Projects
2	*(14)*	**ATIC ATAC** Ultimate
3	*(10)*	**LUNAR JETMAN** Ultimate
4	*(37)*	**3D ANT ATTACK** Quicksilva
5	*(4)*	**JETPAC** Ultimate
6	*(1)*	**ZZOOM** Imagine
7	*(33)*	**THE HOBBIT** Melbourne House
8	*(-)*	**CHEQUERED** FLAG Psion
9	*(-)*	**HUNCHBACK** Ocean
10	*(16)*	**VALHALLA** Legend
11	*(-)*	**3D DEATHCHASE** Micromega
12	*(5)*	**PENETRATOR** Melbourne House
13	*(20)*	**ARCADIA** Imagine
14	*(-)*	**SCRABBLE** Psion
15	*(-)*	**BUGABOO** Quicksilva
16	*(-)*	**METEOR STORM** Quicksilva
17	*(-)*	**MAZIACS** DK Tronics
18	*(46)*	**JUMPING JACK** Imagine
19	*(-)*	**HOUSE OF SHADOWS** Shadow
20	*(30)*	**TIMEGATE** Quicksilva
21	*(-)*	**PHEENIX** Megadodo
22	*(13)*	**MAD MARTHA** Mikrogen
23	*(26)*	**GALAXIANS** Artic
24	*(-)*	**CHESS** Psion
25	*(28)*	**HALL OF THE THINGS** Crystal
26	*(-)*	**FOOTBALL MANAGER** Addictive
27	*(6)*	**TRANZ-AM** Ultimate
28	*(12)*	**ZIP ZAP** Imagine
29	*(-)*	**FLIGHT SIMULATION** Psion
30	*(-)*	**THRUSTA** Software Projects
31	*(-)*	**SPLAT** Incentive
32	*(43)*	**COSMIC RAIDERS** Mikrogen
33	*(-)*	**HARRIER ATTACK** Durrell
34	*(-)*	**CHUCKIE EGG** A + F
35	*(-)*	**STONKERS** Imagine
36	*(-)*	**THE PYRAMID** Fantasy
37	*(-)*	**PUSH OFF** Software Projects
38	*(-)*	**ORACLE'S CAVE** Doric
39	*(-)*	**TEST MATCH** C.R.L.
40	*(9)*	**TERROR DAKTIL** 4D Melbourne Hse
41	*(-)*	**GAMES DESIGNER** Quicksilva
42	*(35)*	**PSSST** Ultimate
43	*(-)*	**ROMMEL'S REVENGE** Crystal
44	*(-)*	**POOL** C.D.S.
45	*(-)*	**PHARAOH'S TOMB** Phipps
46	*(44)*	**GOLF** Virgin
47	*(-)*	**IT'S ONLY ROCK 'N' ROLL** K-tel
48	*(-)*	**COLOSSAL ADVENTURE** Level 9
49	*(29)*	**REDWEED** Lothlorien
50	*(-)*	**ANDROID 2** Vortex

HOTLINE Winner this month was Ray Blake, Rayleigh, Essex. The three runners-up were; K. Warming, Hants; Scott Vincent, Farnborough; Matthew Reid, London W6.

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My top five favourite programs in descending order are:

TITLE	PRODUCER
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	



BE ONE OF THREE PEOPLE TO WIN SOFTWARE!

THE MONTHLY CRASH QUIZ



I'm sure lots of you will have spotted the deliberate (ahem!) error in last month's quiz on arcade game inlay cards. Question 6 referred, of course, to an adventure game and not an arcade game. Just put in to keep you on your toes!

Anyway, carrying on from last issue's theme, let's see how much you know about adventure games — story lines and inlays. Send your answers on a postcard or in a letter to this address:

CRASH MICRO QUIZ, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB

1) If you were seeking the Scroll of Wisdom,where would you be looking?
2) The Ice Giants can be a problem, but in what game?
3) It says, 'Loki arrives.' Where are you?
4) If you found yourself underneath Mount Elk and surrounded by goblins, whose home would you have penetrated?
5) Lots of things have been hidden in 'time and space', but what did Automata hide in there?
6) If you think of yourself as a Super Spy, exactly who do you seek?
7) Henry and his son Arbuthnot have appeared twice — but what's the name of the waiter?
8) If you found yourself in the Ring of Fire, what would you be on?
9) In The Sorceror's Castle, you might bump into its owner. What's his name?
10) Tolkien's Lord of the Rings is often taken as a basis for the adventure idea. Name two games associated with the story of its heroes.
11) Name the hit pop group who have turned Automata into a household name.

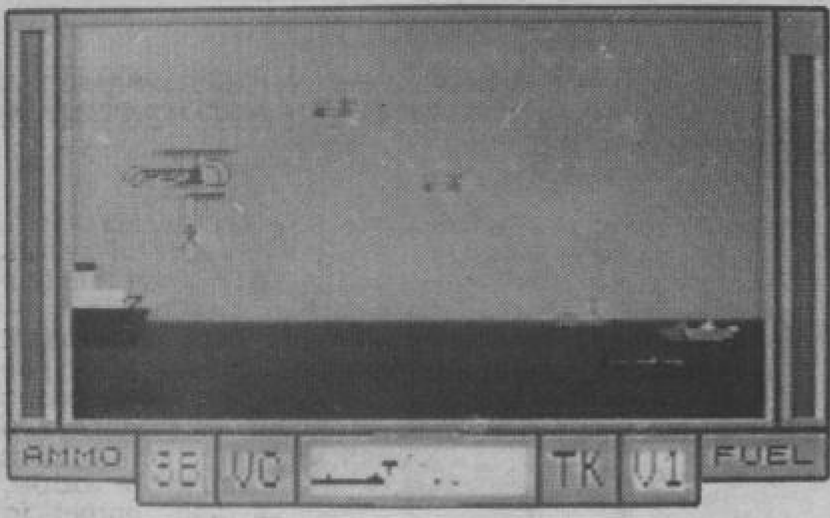
Entries must be received by last post, **Friday 16th. March**. The first three correct entries drawn from the bag will each receive £25 worth of software of their choice. Results and answers will apear in May's issue.



LOOK OUT FOR NEXT MONTH'S CRASH QUIZ!

Krakatoa

Producer: **Abbex**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Paul Reynolds**



Krakatoa — East of Java — the first disaster game.

First shown at the December ZX Microfair, *Krakatoa* grabbed the attention of most passersby because its wealth of detail is amazing. There's such a lot going on. And there's a lot to do in the game, most of it neatly shown in the excellent demo, which runs automatically after loading and between games.

Your task as a chopper pilot is twofold. A tanker is sheltering in the bay from attacks by V1 missiles and submarines armed with torpedoes. Across the bay the dormant volcano (hence the title) has come to life and is threatening to errupt. You must try to rescue as many people from its threat as possible. Your helicopter is equipped with a machine gun, depth charges and a rope for rescuing people. The game starts with the chopper on the ground on the heli pad, beside the workman's hut. When your fuel gets low and you return to the heli pad to refuel and re-arm, the workman dashes out and does it all in a very busy animated sequence. On taking off, you pass out over the bay and reach the massive tanker. It's crew start to leap overboard as soon as the enemy do them damage, and so pose another problem for you and your trusty rope!

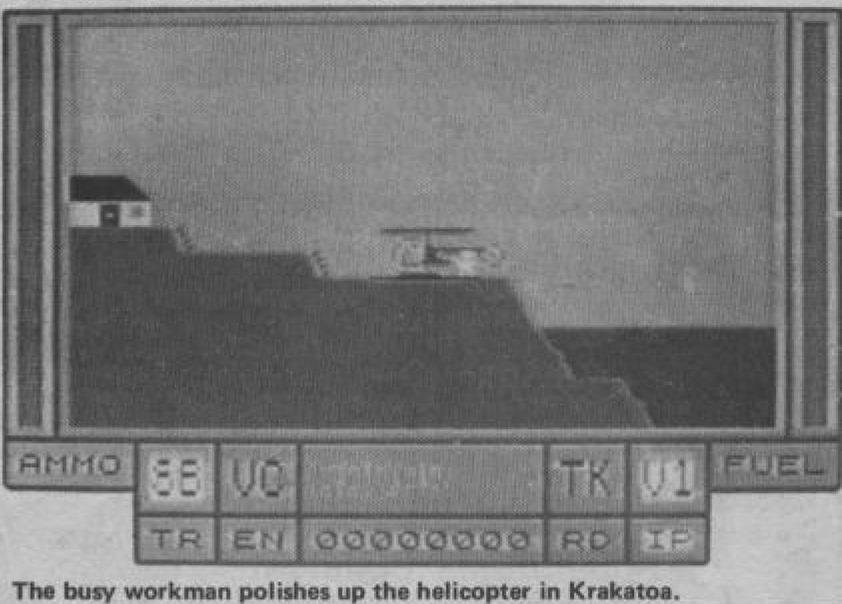
Beyond the tanker is open sea, full of enemy, and the Volcanic Island with its hapless inhabitants. The screen shows all this in profile, scrolling as it goes. 'Scramble' style. To the left and right of the display area are ammo and fuel bars, and below are instruments including a radar display, and score.

CRITICISM

'This has to be one of the busiest games in a long while! There are such a lot of keys to use that it takes a lot of practice before you can even become slightly proficient. The graphics are really excellent, well drawn and animated, and there's also a lot of detail in the game ideas too. If you accidentally drop a depth charge on the tanker there's a very good explosion with chunks flying off, and a second later a crew man appears and takes a leap off the stern and begins swimming around. If you successfully pick him up on the end of the lowered rope, it is very tricky to get him into the chopper as he must be on the very end of the rope, otherwise he gets knocked off as the rope is pulled aboard, and falls back into the sea! This is a complicated and demanding game, which I can't see losing its appeal for a long time.'

Krakatoa is both addictive and hard to play. But I thought the keys were poorly laid out and there is no joystick option. This makes it even more difficult to play. And it's a shame that there isn't much in the way of instructions, because there are quite a few instruments which are not explained. But these are small niggles, because the game itself is marvellous.; Excellent graphics (fantastic explosion when you are hit), very colourful and with plenty of sound. Watch out for volcanic explosions!'

'It's only in some small details that *Krakatoa* is less good. Why, for instance, didn't they print the 10 control keys on the cassette inlay? During the attract mode, the keys are listed for a very short time and there are too many to get written down that quickly, and too many to remember. The control keys are difficult to manage and laid out in a rather odd way. Once over these problems, the game proves to be very good to play, with loads of detail, great graphics and sound and a lot of imagination. It should keep players going for a long time, if only because it takes ages to become any good, and the scope for getting better scores each time you play is enormous with so many people to rescue.'



The busy workman polishes up the helicopter in Krakatoa.

COMMENTS

Control keys: 5 = up, 3 = down, 7 = forward, bottom row = reverse, 9 = fire, zero = drop depth charge, W = rope down, R = rope up, ENTER = pause
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: undeniably a handful, but very responsive
Colour: very good
Graphics: excellent, very animated
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: 1 — it's enough
Lives: 1 — it's enough
General rating: very good — highly recommended

Use of computer	70%
Graphics	92%
Playability	87%
Getting started	70%
Addictive qualities	88%
Value for money	90%
Overall	83%

KNOCKOUT

Producer: **Mikrogen**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **G. Smallcross**

Knockout is a game in which you compete against the Spectrum or up to three other players, and is effectively a computer version of the popular board game 'Rebound'.

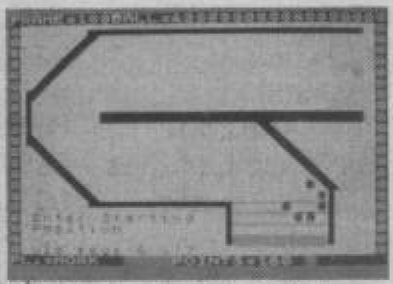
The object is to bounce balls around a board and leave them within firmly defined scoring positions. Each player has four balls to a frame and opponents take it in turns to play each ball of the frame.

The screen display shows a plan view of the board with black walls bent in the shape of a tight G, the ball being shot from the top right end of the G, rebounding off the end walls and ending up in the tail of the G where there are two blue areas of scoring and three green higher scoring areas before a yellow out of bounds.

The player's ball (up to four different colours) is positioned vertically for its shot, an angle determined, and a strength of shot by onscreen prompts and the cursor keys 6 and 7. The balls all remain in play until the frame is completed so there is the chance of knocking an opponent's ball, or your own, into better or worse positions for scoring. Players enter their names at the start of play and the computer scores for each and keeps a running total. If you are on your own and only enter one name, then you will be playing against the computer.

CRITICISM

'You might think from the title that this is a 'Breakout' type of game — but it's not, more a new breed of computer bowls, the sort they



Knockout — very successful.

have in pubs. I liked it very much, why, I don't really know! But it is a very simple game to play and suitable for all ages and all types. It's difficult to say how addictive people might find it, but at a guess I would say very. It's also good that you can play by yourself or with others.'

'The game is played in frames up to a maximum of nine, and is a good conversion of a floor or board game to the screen. The game is quite good to play, although not very addictive because the true game calls for physical skill in placing shots, but the fact that it's different places it above average.'

'There's nothing spectacular about *Knockout*. The graphics are essentially simple, but everything is elegantly planned and implemented. Of all sports simulations I've seen recently, I think this is the most appealing and a worthy addition to anyone's collection.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: all done with prompts and keys 6 & 7, & Y
Colour: effectively plain and to the point
Graphics: simple, ball rebounds are very good
Sound: good
Features: against computer or up to 3 other players
General rating: an excellent simulation, difficult to define addictivity properly, but good value generally.

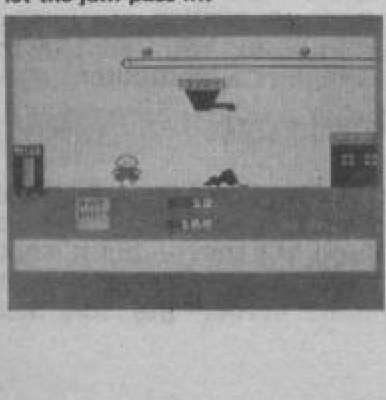
Use of computer	70%
Graphics	52%
Playability	65%
Getting started	69%
Addictive qualities	50%
Value for money	68%
Overall	**62%**

APPLE JAM

Producer: **DK Tronics**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **E. Hickman**

DK Tronics have generally tended in the past to write good introductions as to the objectives of their games, but the recent releases have suffered with little or no explanation. *Hard Cheese* is a case in point, where a game starts without aims being made clear and where the scenario is obviously too complicated to sort out easily. The danger with this is that players can run out of patience before tapping the game's potential.

Open wide those pearly gates and let the jam pass in.



Apple Jam is another example. In this case there are no explanations at all. It is, in concept, a very simple game, and the broad intentions of the author are immediately clear, or rapidly sorted out, but as at least one reviewer found, points of the game still baffle.

Basically, the screen has a lift at the left, a sauna box at the right, a jam dispenser in the middle, overhead, and above that, a conveyer belt which produces apples. In a lower portion is a rat tunnel. The screen also shows the game score and the hi-score, three purple pills and the words RAT BAIT! A little man is made to run back and forth. He opens his mouth when correctly positioned under the dropping point of either jam or apples. Each time he gulps down another mouthful, he grows a bit fatter. To work off the excess weight he must enter the sauna for a few seconds and when he comes out he's all slim and wonderful. If he fails to go to the sauna each mouthful after a certain point, it loses him one of the purple pills. When all three have gone he dies.

Below in the rat run, the rats are running. Should the man miss any apples or jam, they fall through and the rats eat the food. Once this has happened they tend to come up a floor and eat the man. He can escape by getting into the lift, but that means missing more food. Should you do really well against these miserable odds, there's a giant hornet to watch out for.

CRITICISM

'A non-violent game for the younger games-player, that's my impression. There's a fair use of colour and the character block graphics are smooth and fair in quality. It's a nice touch when an ambulance comes up to collect the dead hero after being rat-bitten, but I think they cheated by having it back-up — it could have driven forwards and turned around.'

'This game made me feel quite dense — it looks simple, it is simple, but I couldn't work out what was going on at all. I never found out what the RAT BAIT! was for, if anything, and someone had to tell me what the pills were for. I had figured out what the sauna did, and became obsessed with my hero's figure. Consequently my opinions are somewhat coloured. On the whole, a rather poor game.'

'The odds have been stacked up too high to make this into an addictive game. Once the rats emerge you never have a chance to catch more food, or sweat it off, and it all becomes pointless. It is, anyway, very repetetive.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 5 & 8 left & right
Joystick: Protek, AGF
Keyboard play: responsive
Colour: fair
Graphics: reasonable
Sound: poor
Skill levels: 1
Lives: endless, but three pills
General rating: poor on instructions, a game for younger players with a limited addictivity.

Use of computer	65%
Graphics	59%
Playability	35%
Getting started	40%
Addictive qualities	40%
Value for money	50%
Overall	**47%**

Bubble Trouble

Producer: **Arcade**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Bruce Rutherford**

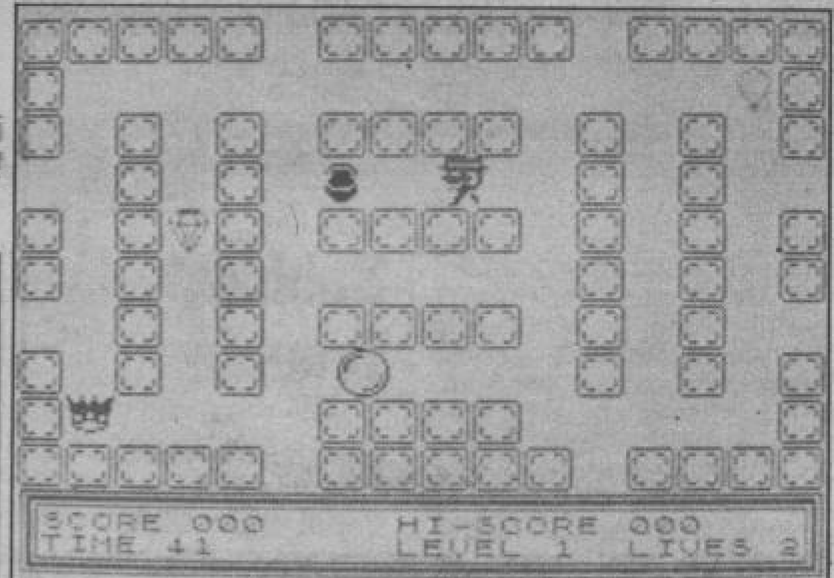
Like the majority of **Arcade's** other games, *Bubble Trouble* is built on a massive scale, and consists of 50 screens. In effect these are all reasonably simple mazes made up from all sorts of symbols and having a vertical or horizontal wrap around 'tunnel'. The story is that you're a burglar and your aim in life, not unnaturally, is to steal anything you can lay your hands on. This usually consists on four valuables per maze, and the more you steal, the more the points you receive. Life could be so simple, but of course there is a serious problem, and it comes in the form of over-friendly bubbles who want to smother you with love. Perhaps the author got the idea from the recent re-showings of Patrick McGoohan's 60s TV series *The Prisoner*, where the unwilling victims of 'The Village' were kept incontrol by vast, white balloons that bounded after them.

There is no start and no end to this game, since you may select any of the fift screens for a beginning. Once you have collected the four valuables in a screen, bonus points pop up to be collected by moving over them. The screen finishes after an elapsed time limit and moves you inexorable onto whatever screen follows. Your only weapon is a dispersal key, but it only works once every 10 seconds and isn't terrible effective.

CRITICISM

'*Bubble Trouble* is a 'Pac Man' variant but an imaginative mutation on the theme. Nice graphics, I liked the burglar, who's called Basil, really a hat on legs. For keyboard players, however, the cursor keys for control are not a good arrangement; and I thought the key/stick responses were a little poor.'

Rather like The Detective, *this game works on the principle of wearing you down*



The 'Prisoner' in the maze — Bubble Trouble.

over a space of time, since in itself it isn't all that difficult to play. The graphics are attractive and move smoothly, but the game lacks something to make it really addictive. It does have three skill levels (an extra bubble per level) but each level also moves slower. In the end I don't think this is quite up to the standard of The Detective.'

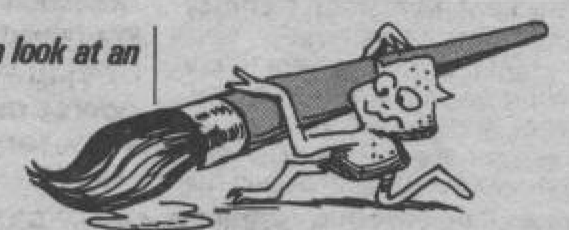
'*Bubble Trouble* is fun to play, reasonably addictive and very simple. It's single-mindedness is what makes it good to play — no concentration required! So it fits quite nicely as a pleasant interlude between other games. Not great, but certainly a reasonable game.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors with zero to fir, not the best arrangement
Joystick: AGF, Protek, Kempston
Keyboard play: slightly hesitant
Colour: good
Graphics: good
Sound: average
Skill levels: 3
Lives: 3
Screens: 50
General rating: above average

Use of computer	**58%**
Graphics	**65%**
Playability	**70%**
Getting started	**68%**
Addictive qualities	**57%**
Value for money	**60%**
Overall	**63%**

Franco Frey takes a look at an arty utility.



Paintbox

Producer: **Print 'n' Plotter**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Joe Gillespie**

If you've ever tried to draw a high resolution picture with the bare and BASIC facilities of the Spectrum, you will probably want to investigate the appropriate tools and utilities which exist for this purpose. You have the choice of a hardware-based system using a light pen or a digital tracer with the required software routine/utility, or you can go for a less expensive software solution such as a graphics handling utility program.

Paintbox fits into the second category and covers all aspects of the Spectrum graphics. You may select between the cursor keys, cursor-controlled joystick of the Kempston joystick to use as a 'drawing-pen'. the program is menu driven and splits into two major functions — the UDG creation and handling, and the high resolution screen plotter.

UDG EDITOR

The **UDG Editor** is excellent; it allows you to create four times as many UDG's as there are in the normal Spectrum BASIC by storing in four banks of 21 UDG sets into memory, which can then be called selectively into the normal UDG area of the Spectrum.

The Editor allows you to view the UDG banks and to recall any of the four banks for editing. Selecting **DRAWING BOARD** will display the UDG bank, the UDG in magnified form, normally and inverted, and in actual size, and the deimal values for each line. You may call up a normal Spectrum character, an existing UDG character or a blank for editing purposes. Using the cursor keys/joystick and fire button, you can edit or completely redraw the UDG, and when finished, allocate it inside the UDG bank. In doing this, the inverse and rotate (4 x 90°) and mirror image facilities are very helpful.

Having created all the necessary UDG's you can save them on tape together with a machine code routine for manipulating them from BASIC, ready to be recalled in your own programs.

PRECISION PLOTTER

The **Precision Plotter** is the drawing tool for your high resolution pictures, and provides drawing facilities using the cursor keys/joystick with a constant display of the position co-ordinates. Two moving speeds may be selected by use of the SHIFT key. All the drawing of Spectrum BASIC may be used including: Plot, Draw, Circle, Ink, Over, Copy, Save & Load. Selection of Paper Colour has been omitted from within the screen plotter quite deliberately to avoid the confusions which can arise from the low resolution colour map of the Spectrum (i.e. use of only 2 colours — ink & paper within the 8 x 8 character grid).

This user-protection may be overcome by breaking to the main menu and recalling the screen plotter, whereupon the new paper colour may be selected and the permanent memory screen recalled.

Additionally, there are the following useful facilities; **Fill** enclosed areas, **Erase** last operation, **Radial Mode** — retains starting point of the drawing line in the original plot position, **Arc**, **Cursor Choice** — crosswire or dot, **Permanent Memory** — retains the current screen in memory, **Graphics** — recalls screen, **Break** — stores screen in memory and returns to main menu.

IN USE

The **UDG Editor** and **Screen Plotter** may be combined by selecting **Screen Planner** from the Main Menu: all 84 UDG's may be drawn on screen with the high resolution screen as background. The low resolution print co-ordinates are displayed in this mode, and Ink & Paper colour may be changed. By constantly switching between Screen Planner and Prescision Plotter you can build up a picture within the limits of your own imagination and the Spectrum's limited screen display.

The current UDG's may be expanded by loading previously stored UDG banks, thus increasing the amount of UDG's on screen. Throughout Precision Plotter and Screen Planner you may select to save your efforts to tape with a SCREEN$ display file save or with a normal memory file save, which includes the machine code routine for instant recall from BASIC (using RANDOMIZE USR 59980). The memory file, however, must be protected from the BASIC area by lowering RAMTOP to 53059 (with a CLEAR command). The data to screen dump routine may be amended so that multiple screen files may be stored and recalled.

The program proves to be very foolproof in as much that if the permanent memory does get corrupted, there is still the Erase Memory as a backup facility, so you don't risk losing hours of work. Nevertheless, it would be wise to save intermediate results to tape for protection against brown or blackouts!

A commendable effort by **Print 'n' Plotter** — now if only the package included a pinch of artistic talent, I might be able to draw . . .

COMMENTS

Control keys: Menu driven, self explanatory — cursors/joystick for positioning, SHIFT for slow movement. Plot = Q, Draw = W, Fill = F, Erase = E, Circle = H, Rad Mode = R, Line Mode = 3, Arc = A, Ink = X, Over = N, Permanent Memory = P, Graphics = 9, Dot Cursor = M, Crosswire Cursor = K, Break = CAPSHIFT/SPACE, Copy = COPY, Save = S, Load = J.
Sound: none
Features: 24 page booklet and excellent Demo Program
General rating: good.

CRUISE ATTACK

Producer: **Mikrogen**
Memory required: **48K**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **C. Hinsley**

Mikrogen make little secret of the fact that this is another 'Missile Command' copy, stating the fact in their inlay to the game. In most respects it turns out to be a very reasonable version. There are the six cities, but only two laser bases rather that the more usual three, each one firing independently. Apart from the incoming missile trails, there are also blue torpedoes to contend with.

CRITICISM

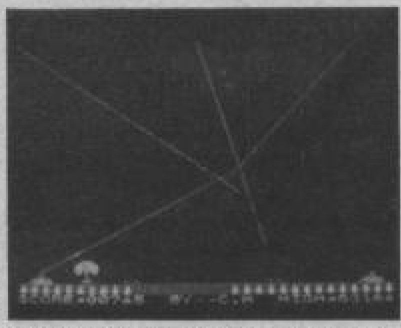
'Of the ones I've seen recently, this game probably has the best graphics for a 'Missile Command' version on the Spectrum. The graphics are fairly close to the original, in fact the atomic clouds on impact are an improvement. But control of the targeting sight is always a problem. The keys are not well laid out (it's difficult to play this type of game with keys anyway). But if you have a Mikrogen joystick, then definitely buy this version of the game.'

'Realistic explosions and hi-res graphics make Cruise Attack *look good, but the movement of the cross hair is fairly slow and spoils the playability. And the right hand controls are badly placed.'*

'This is a very passable version of 'Missile Command' with very fine explosion effects. The major difficulty is moving the cross hair because of the control keys, and your missiles seem to take an age to do their job. It seems a shame that they haven't allowed for more than one skill level, and I missed the enemy satellites, although they would have been hard to get without a joystick.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: poorly laid out; Q/A up/down, L/P left and right, Z fire left base, S/S fire right base
Joystick: Mikrogen



The atomic mushroom clouds are an improvement on the original.

Keyboard play: apart from the ergonomics, reasonable. The inlay states user-definable keys, but there aren't any
Colour: above average
Graphics: good
Sound: average
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 6 cities
General rating: average,

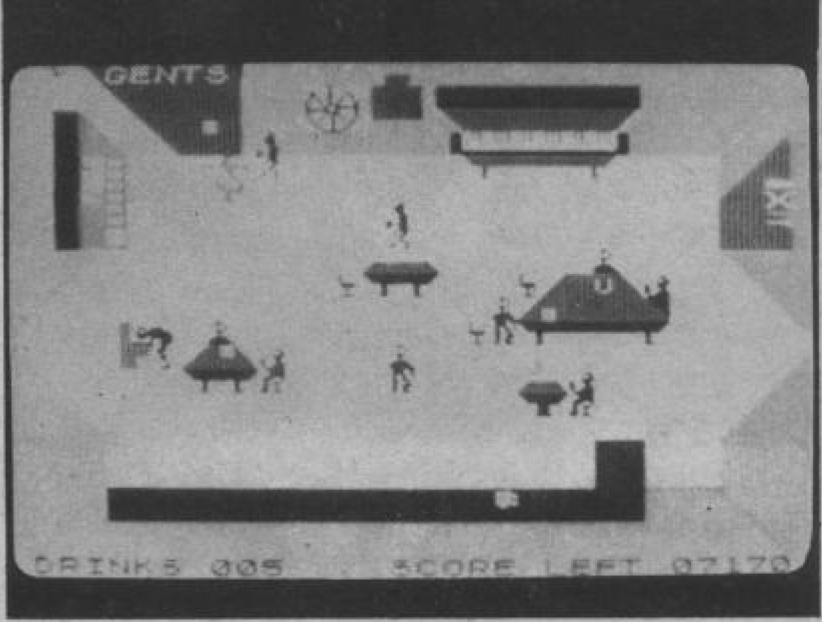
Use of computer	48%
Graphics	70%
Playability	68%
Getting started	56%
Addictive qualities	70%
Value for money	60%
Overall	**62%**

Pi-Eyed

Producer: **Automata**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.00**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Andrew Stagg**

In a further attempt to undermine the integrity, purity and clean livingness of the noble arcade tradition, **Automata**, the well-known TV pundits on computerology, have released *Pi-Eyed*. This game is destined to go straight to the top of the Moral Majority Chart of unfavoured programs! It stars none other than the Piman, but a Piman to whom success has had a deteriorating effect. He's hit the bottle and now staggers bleary-eyed from pub to pub in search of liquid oblivion.

The scene is the street, and Piman is trotting along. If he gets hit by a car he loses points. You can take him into one of the many pubs lining the street, but he can't leave until he has drunk all the pints on the bar. This involves diving in between the chatting regulars without disturbing them (loses points), slipping up on crisp packets and things (loses points) or slipping on slops (more gone).



Piman in bar room scandal – Shock Horror!

And of course there is also the by now obligatory treat of a bonus hit single on the reverse of the tape. *Pi-Eyed*, described as a heart-rending message, written by Lurch, the office parrot.

CRITICISM

'This is a sort of 'Frogger' both out on the street and in the pubs, dodging the cars and drinkers. It manages to be fun, and the things people say in some of the buildings is often funny or insulting or both. I found the Piman a bit difficult to control when inside a pub, as he tends to jiggle when drunk. Also, at one bar there was a figure with a dog in the way, and after all efforts, the final pint remained unobtainable on the bar. I would have to be honest and say that this wasn't one of my favourite games.

'The graphics are very entertaining and colourful, and the game amusing to play for a short while. It certainly couldn't be called addictive though. I would guess it's the sort of game that appeals to Pimaniacs as light relief between trying to win 6,000 or a trip to Hollywood.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 6/7 up/down
Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek
Keyboard play: fairly responsive, but difficult to control
Colour: well used
Graphics: small, but neatly drawn, although there isn't much actual animation
Sound: continuous and average
Skill levels: how many pints can you take?
Lives: never heard of them
General rating: may appeal to Pimaniacs, playable but not very addictive

Use of computer	56%
Graphics	57%
Playability	59%
Getting started	67%
Addictive qualities	45%
Value for money	57%
Overall	**57%**

HUNCHBACK

Producer: **Ocean**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.90**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **C.F. Urquhart**

Hunchback seems to have been quite a while a'coming, so it's pleasing to be able to report that it seems worth the waiting. In some sense it's a platform, hole-leaping game that takes place on one platform. The story, as the title says, is set on a great castle and you are the (well known) hunchback, Quasimodo. Your task is to rescue Esmerelda from the stronghold. To do this you must jump, leap and dodge your way across no less than 15 screens of sheer torture.

The screen shows a large wall reaching half way up. Quasimodo starts on the left and he must reach the bell rope on the right. At the base of the screen is a graphic representation of the 15 ramparts to be tackled. The problems encountered include fire balls which must be leapt, pits to be swung across on a rope, and others which need several ropes, castellations filled with spearmen who raise and lower their spears and must be jumped, and then combinations of all these elements. Additionally there is a red knight climbing the wall. If he reaches the top before Quasimodo gets across, he sticks his sword into his bottom! If you get

Reviews



through to the final screen you are rewarded by the sight of Esmerelda stuck in her tower, ready for rescue.

CRITICISM

'The graphics are smooth, well detailed and nicely animated, especially Quasimodo, and the colours are well used too. Quite what the tune 'If you go down to the woods today . . .' has got to do with Quasimodo I don't know, but it sounds good. I found this game very playable, although when you jump across the pit on a rope, timing has to be spot on with no +1 or −1 variation. I think that could have been made easier.'

'At first playing Hunchback *is fun and difficult, but the screens are made up of re-using the same elements in different combinations and eventually it gets visually boring. It certainly demands skills of timing and reaction, especially when jumping over spears and dodging two arrows or fireballs coming from opposite directions.'*

'**Hunchback** looks very good, bright, cheerful and with a loud tune. I think it could have had a bit more sound during the frame though. It's also quite difficult to play well, but in the end I think it palls as there isn't quite enough variation in the screens. This game will probably appeal to younger players as an intermediate stage between very simple games and the more complicated ones that are now appearing. But on the whole quite good value for money.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: good, Q/W left right and SYMBOL SHIFT for jump
Joystick: Kempston, Protek, AGF, Sinclair ZX 2
Keyboard play: responsive but jump timing very hard
Colour: good
Graphics: good
Sound: good tunes
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: 15
General rating: good value and reasonably addictive.

Use of computer	72%
Graphics	68%
Playability	65%
Getting started	70%
Addictive qulities	59%
Value for money	62%
Overall	66%

Pat The Postman

Producer: **Mikrogen**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**

Pat has to collect parcels from the houses and take them to the post office. When he has enough, he must put them on the train. Sounds easy?

There are twelve houses in the town, but not every house has a parcel for collection. Fortunately this game is in no way a simulation of real life, for if Pat attempts to collect a parcel from a house that hasn't got one, the post office promptly, and inexplicably, bursts into flames. Pat must then dash to the fire station and get a fire engine. If he's in time the conflagration is put out and work resumes as normal.

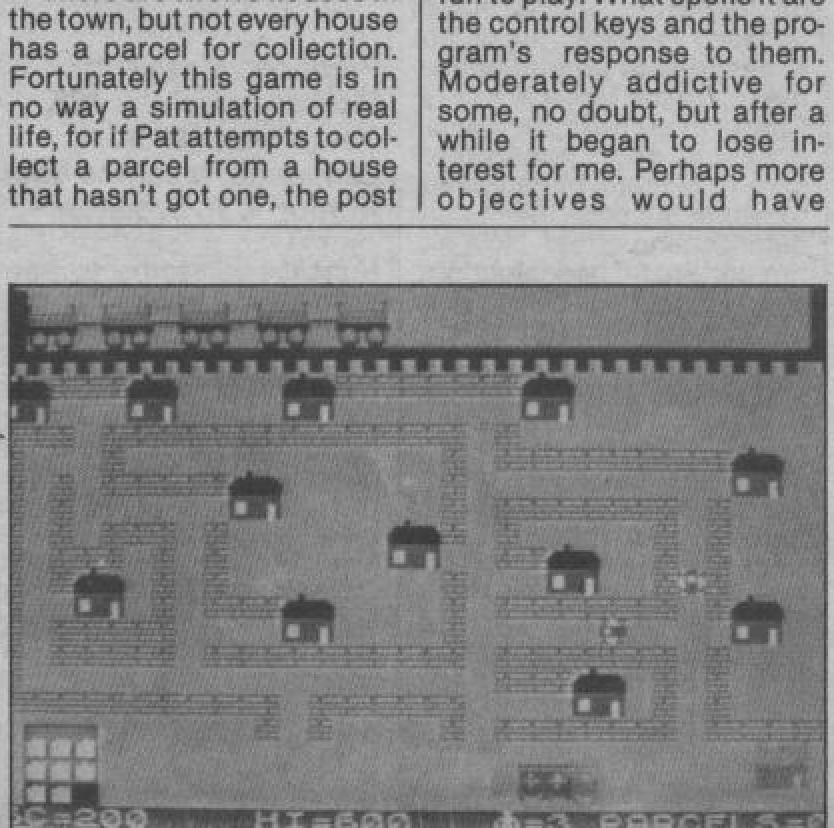
Depending on the selected skill level Pat must collect either three or five parcels before they go on the train. To make matters worse, there are two red cars driving around the streets like maniacs, and with a nasty tendency of homing in on Pat while he's on his rounds.

CRITICISM

'It takes a few attempts to work out what to do, since there are no on-screen instructions or advice, and nothing on the cassette inlay, not even the control keys. These turn out to be the cursors, always a poor arrangement, but made worse here by the poor responsiveness. Postman Pat is quite a good game for younger age groups, but will probably appeal to all. It soon becomes easy and this reduces its addictiveness.'

The graphics are fair and would be better if smoother or slightly bigger, but it does make for a lively screen. The game is a good idea, can be fun to play, and would be better still if it were more responsive. Sometimes you press a key and nothing happens, except a car running into you. For the younger player mostly.'

'This is a little confusing at first, as there are no instructions as to the aim of the game, but as you get the hang of it, it turns out to be fun to play. What spoils it are the control keys and the program's response to them. Moderately addictive for some, no doubt, but after a while it began to lose interest for me. Perhaps more objectives would have helped, and different skill levels with different problems to overcome, although I must admit, I never really discovered what the black objects that popped up occasionally on the roads were or what they did.'



COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors
Joystick: AGF, Protek
Keyboard play: poor responses
Colour: good
Graphics: above average
Sound: not much, but strong when it does
Skill levels: 2
Lives: 3
Screens: 1
General rating: above average

Use of computer	45%
Graphics	60%
Playability	68%
Getting started	32%
Addictive qualities	47%
Value for money	60%
Overall	52%

Dimension Destructors

Producer: **Artic**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **J. Ritman**

Suddenly from the outer reaches of space, a dot appears on the scanner of your fighter craft. As you tear forward, the dots grow until you can clearly see them in 3D form. Prepare for combat! Your trembling finger reaches for the firing button. You pull across to avoid an enemy fighter as it whistles past you in its kamikaze attack.

The inlay intro for this game is quite prosaic in comparison with many, and becomes justified when you see the graphics. *Dimension Destructors* is a sort of 'Battle Zone' game in space, and employs three dimensional graphics very reminiscent of Artic's earlier *3D Combat Zone*. The object is quite simple, use the directional keys to line up the approaching enemy fighters (hollow pyramid and diamond



shapes) in the central cross hairs and then zap them with your laser. This fires twin bolts of energy which converge a distance ahead in the cross hairs.

The title card is very bright,well drawn, and the credit card and points/hi-score table is very effectively done in scrolling letters which run off into the distance in perspective, rather like the titles for *Star War* movies.

CRITICISM

'The graphics are fairly simple but well animated in 3D and the enemy explode into chunks battle zone style. I found it quite exciting to play and I think it's one of Artic's best releases yet. The titles and hi-score are very impressive, if a little slow.'

'At last, a good 3D shoot em up — shame you move so slowly! The various enemy craft have different flight tactics. If you're good enough you will find out where the enemy fighters come from. The graphics are fair to good. It's difficult to play and in the end I found it a little bit boring, probably due to its difficulty.'

'Perhaps the lack of a landscape makes this game less spectacular than Artic's *3D Combat Zone*, but it is much faster to play and so more fun. The graphics are simple and somewhat colourless as you might expect with hollow 3D, but they work very effectively. The control response is very good, one of the easiest cockpit view games to control I've ever seen. Very playable, but perhaps not massively addictive.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: QWERTY up, ASDFGH down, O = left, P = right, bottom row fires
Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston, Fuller
Keyboard play: very responsive and easy to control
Use of colour: simple
Graphics: effective 3D, good title cards
Sound: reasonable and continuous
Skill levels: gets harder
Lives: 4 shields, 5 lives
General rating: above average to good

Use of computer	73%
Graphics	69%
Playability	64%
Getting started	70%
Addictive qualities	61%
Value for money	70%
Overall	68%

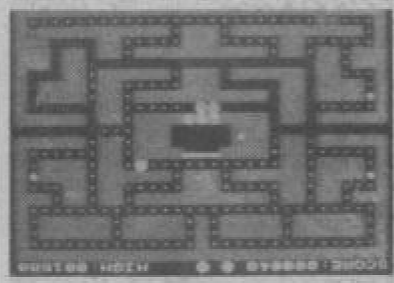
Triad

Producer: **Amba Software**
Memory required: **16K or 48K**
Retail price: **unknown**
Language: **Machine code**

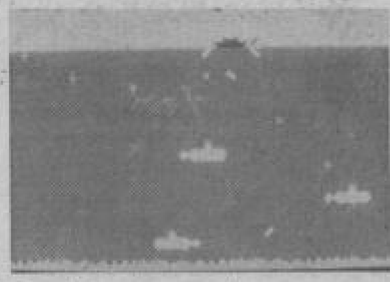
As it's name suggests, this is a compendium of three different arcade games on one cassette. The games are *Snackman, Sub Track* and *Treasure Hunt*.

Snackman is, quite obviously, a 'Pac Man' style game, which features 16 selectable mazes with 10 different playing speeds. *Sub Track*, provides you with the opportunity to lay depth charges from a surface ship, to attack numerous submarines at different depths, while they fire back with mines. In *Treasure Hunt*, a reasonably complicated maze is used in a very pure way — that is, you must find your way through it to collect valuable items. When one has been successfully picked up, another appears somewhere else in the maze, and all against the clock.

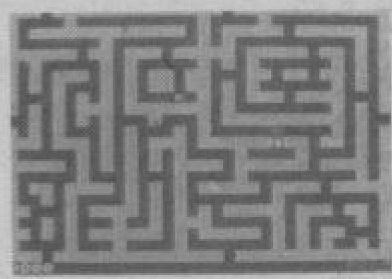
Side A of the cassette loads all three games into a 48K Spectrum, and each may be selected by pressing key 7. Each game comes complete with on-screen instructions. Side B of the tape will load each game individually into a 16K Spectrum.



Triad — Screen 1



Depthcharges away!



Triad — Screen 3

CRITICISM

'In *Snackman*, the graphics are all quite small, but they move well and this isn't a bad version. The *Depthcharge Game* is also reasonable and has quite large graphics. I didn't think so much of the *Treasure Hunt*, despite its 29 mazes and 144 game variations — which must be a record! All the games are reasonable, but none are original and none of them are brilliant. The idea of putting several games onto one cassette is a good one, especially when they are all 'old' games. I won't rate its value for money that highly because I would prefer one good game to three fair/average games.'

'Anyone wanting a reasonable 'Pac Man' and the chance of two other fair arcade games, will find the Triad cassette to be fair value. Overall, the graphics are quite good, but there isn't really anything here to thrill.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: indicated for each game, but all well placed
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: responsive
Colour: reasonable
Sound: varied and reasonable
Skill levels: depends on game, but several
General rating: fair to average.

Use of computer	60%
Graphics	57%
Playability	53%
Getting started	60%
Addictive qulities	43%
Value for money	54%
Overall	55%

Rommel's Revenge

Producer: **Crystal Computing**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **M.S. Horsley**

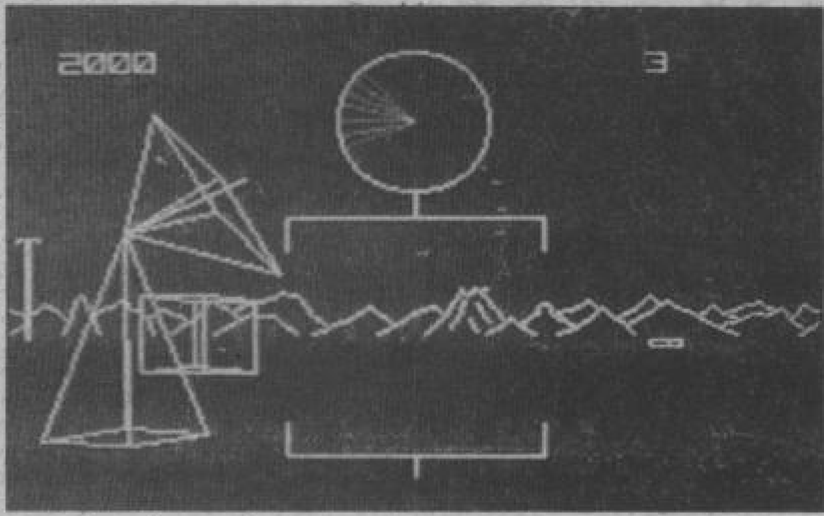
Both of **Crystal's** pre-Christmas arcade releases were copies of well known originals from the arcades, *Invasion of the Body Snatchas* we reviewed in the last month's issue. *Rommel's Revenge* is probably the best Spectrum version yet of the favourite 'Battle Zone' game. There's a natural comparison here with **Artic's** very successful *3D Combat Zone*, and it's arguable as to which is the better since in many respects they are quite different.

The display is set on a flat plain surrounded by mountains and even an active volcano. Numerous buildings and other objects like telegraph poles litter the landscape. In the centre of the screen is a gun sight, and above it a radar screen with sweep arm on which enemy tanks are seen as dots. You, of course, are in command of a tank, and controls allow for forward and reverse movement with rotation left and right. All the graphics are in a hollow 3D which allows all sides of an object to be seen at once. The object of the game, quite simply, is to destroy the enemy tanks and stay alive. The more you destroy the more they come after you.

CRITICISM

'This is the best version of 'Battle Zone' with more objects like poles, radar towers and spouting volcanoes. Missiles seem to take about the right time to reach a target and the game, generally, is faster. Against it is the sound, which is poor, no noises when an enemy explodes and only a weak plop when you fire.'

'It's a bit weak on colour, the 3D graphics are very effective and smooth, but everything is done in white lines on blue. The tanks all move a bit faster than the Artic version, as does the firing, but there aren't as many up against you at one go although it gets progressively tougher. Rather thin sound and I was disappointed with the explosion visuals — the enemy tanks just seem to disappear when hit.'



Strong but silent — the huge landscape of Rommel's Revenge.

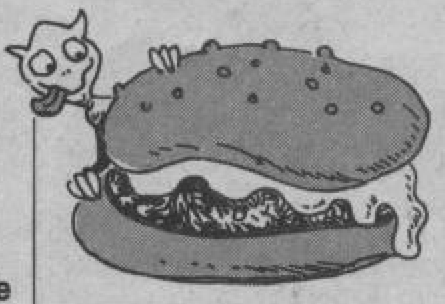
'This is a great game and very playable. The tanks aren't as over-intelligent as the ones in Artic's version. They always managed to twitch out of the way of your shots, but in *Rommel's Revenge* they still manage to be a match. Also the landscape is much more detailed — it's fun at first just to wander round looking at the various buildings and structures.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z/X left/right, N/M forward/backwards, SPACE = fire. In addition — 1/2 sound on/off, V = volcano errupting or not. Both of these options speed up the game if not in use.
Joystick: AGF, Protek, Fuller, Kempston
Colour: poor
Graphics: good
Sound: very poor
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 4
Features: note special loading program which might make you think it isn't loading properly when it is!
General rating: good

Use of computer	**70%**
Graphics	**75%**
Playability	**78%**
Getting started	**50%**
Addictive qualities	**58%**
Value for money	**58%**
Overall	**65%**

Mr. Wimpy



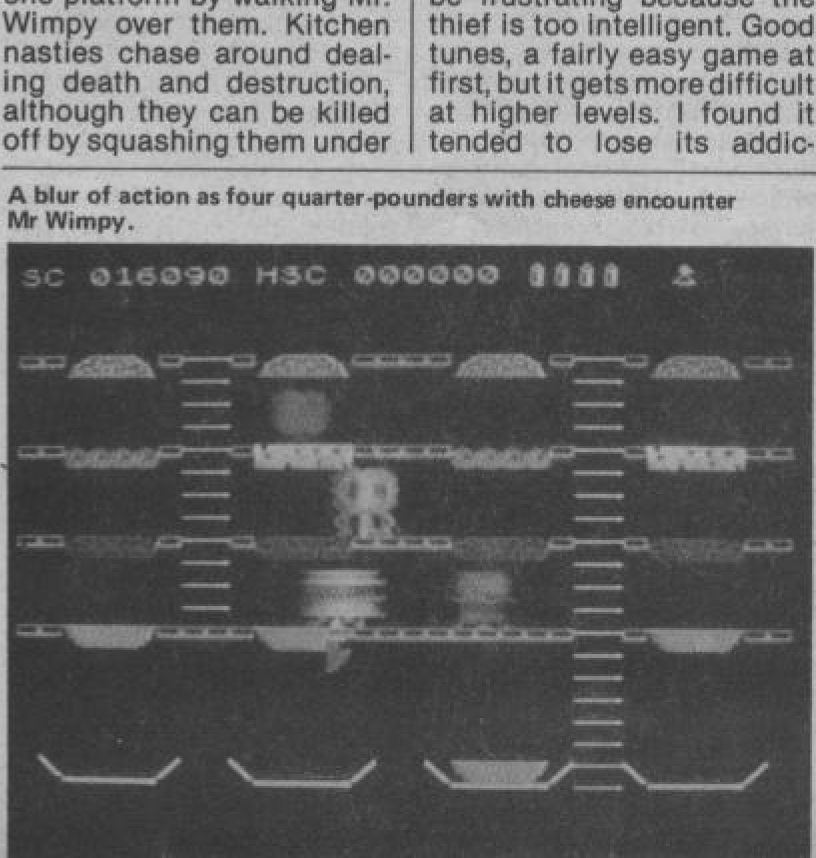
Producer: **Ocean**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.90**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Jon Woods**

Considering how frequently Spectrum software houses crowd each other with arcade copies, it seems surprising that 'Burger Time' type games are not common. **Blaby** must take the credit by quite a long mark for their *Barmy Burgers*, which appeared earlier last year, and is a very good implementation. **Ocean** have attempted to go a stage further in *Mr. Wimpy* (which actually uses Wimpy's famous logo on the cover) by releasing a version which has two separate parts.

The first screen, reminiscent of **Ultimate's** *Pssst*, has Mr. Wimpy attempting to assemble the ingredients. He must carry a tray from the left of screen over to the right where there are three items to be collected one at a time, a lump of cheese and two indistinguishable ingredients but doubtless things that put the ham in burger. The problems are three manholes (lord knows why) which sail up and down and kill old Wimp off if he touches them, and Waldo the burger thief who steals a tray if he runs into Mr. Wimpy. Waldo is fairly intelligent and tries to home in.

If you manage to get all three ingredients back across to the left, then you progress to the second screen, which is the more familiar 'Burger Time' format. Here the layers of the four burgers you must make are kept on separate platforms, connected at intervals by ladders. Segments of each layer are made to drop one platform by walking Mr. Wimpy over them. Kitchen nasties chase around dealing death and destruction, although they can be killed off by squashing them under a falling layer of hamburger, or by a squirt of pepper. It gets rid of them for 30 seconds. You only have 3 squirts available unless you pick up the bonus icecream or coffee cup, which gives you more chances to shoot. When all four hamburgers are fully assembled at the bottom of the screen, you are promoted to the next level.

A blur of action as four quarter-pounders with cheese encounter Mr Wimpy.



CRITICISM

'This is a very colourful game with smooth graphics and good synthesised sound. It starts off well with an excellent title screen. Waldo is an absolute menace, pinching your tray, and this part of the game can be frustrating because the thief is too intelligent. Good tunes, a fairly easy game at first, but it gets more difficult at higher levels. I found it tended to lose its addictiveness after 2 to 3 hours of playing though.'

'The graphics are excellent and use of colour very good. I liked the tunes between games, although during the game the sound is rather poor. The nasties include Sid Sos, Ogy Egg, Sam Spoon and Pam Pickle, and a rotten bunch they are. This is a fun game to play. Very good!'

'The graphics are nicely animated and very well drawn, which makes *Mr. Wimpy* fun to play. Added to that, I think they've got the levels of frustration about right to make it pretty addictive.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: sensible — S/X up/down, N/M left/right, A = pepper
Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek, Sinclair 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Colour: very good
Graphics: excellent
Sound: good tunes, poorer in game
Skill levels: gets harder each game
Lives: 5
General rating: very good.

Use of computer	**76%**
Graphics	**82%**
Playability	**76%**
Getting started	**75%**
Addictive qualities	**76%**
Value for money	**78%**
Overall	**77%**



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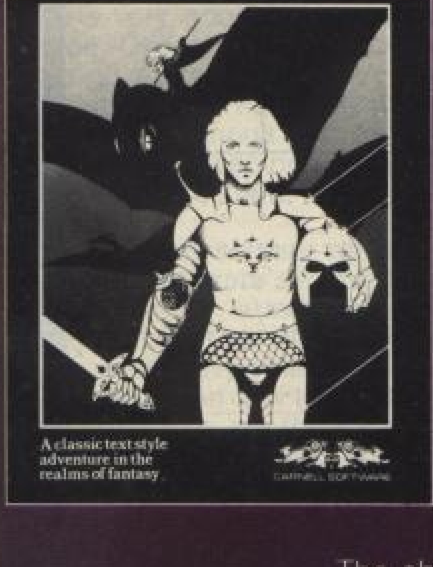


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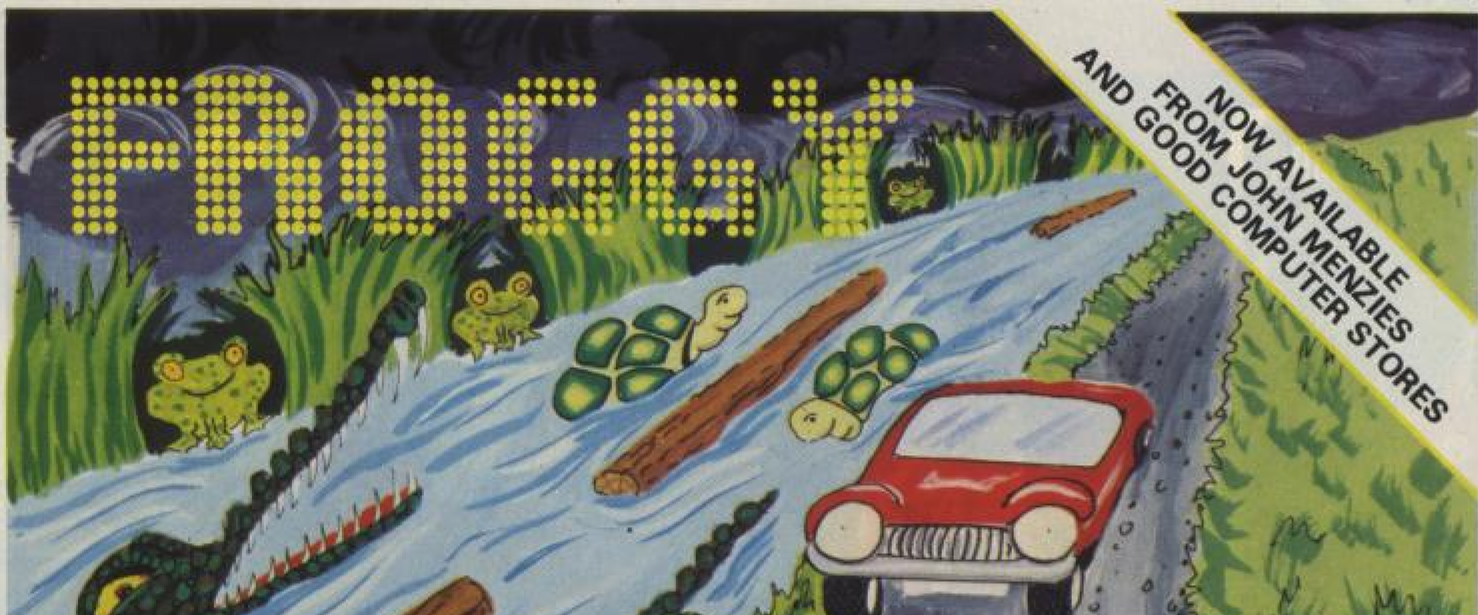
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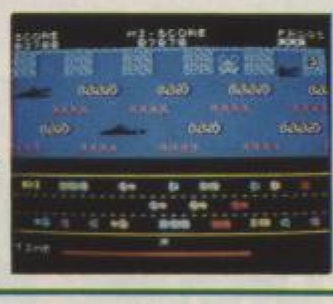
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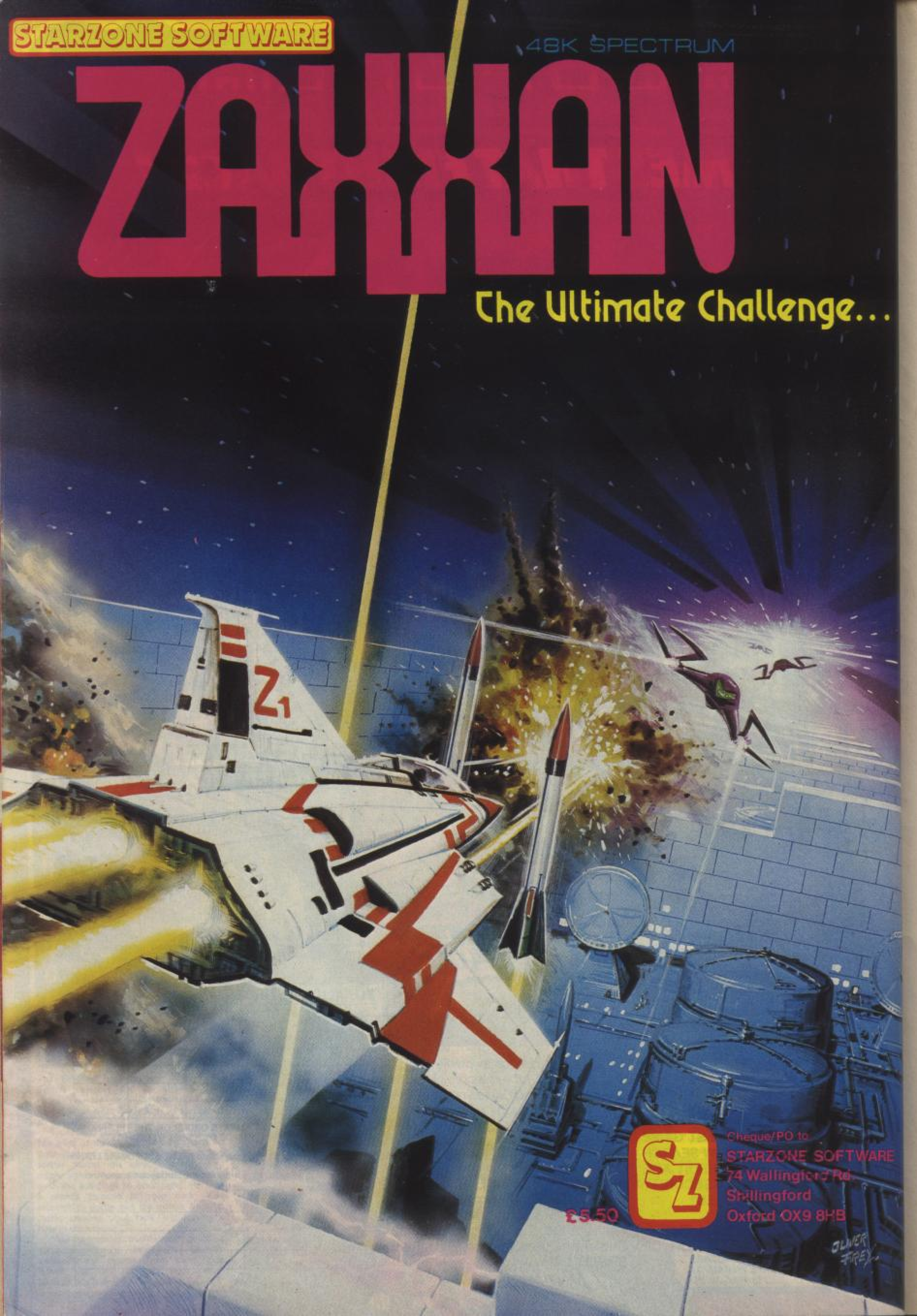
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PROFILE

The Professional Programmer

Enter the professional programmer: Steve Turner and his assistant, Andrew Braybrook have recently entered the field of writing software for home computers on a full time basis. Their first program, 3D Space Wars has reached new heights of realism in its graphic design and ingenious construction. Andrew Hewson writes after his recent meeting with Steve and Andrew.



Steve lives in Essex with his wife and little son, Mark (with another child expected soon). He was thirty this year, a fact that made Steve think carefully about his future and decide to take a radical and some would say risky step.

Steve began to learn programming when he was about 15 years old. His career in computers really started when he attended one of the early TOPS (Training Opportunities Scheme) courses six years ago. After this he entered the Civil Service as a Clerical Assistant. He quickly became a programmer despite not having the necessary two years experience. He became dissatisfied with his work however and left the Civil Service to join one of the world's largest insurance brokers.

He worked for four or five years making financial developments on ICL and IBM mainframe computers. At first he enjoyed the atmosphere in a big insurance company who insure, through Lloyds, everything up to Concorde and the Space Shuttle. He became a specialist, converting systems from other machines to IBM, etc. He was appointed a team leader, working on his own systems.

Steve has always been interested in home computers, and owned a ZX80 for some years. He became more interested in the hardware — how the chips and circuits work and so learned about assemblers to help him understand more about it. He also tried writing games on the ZX80 but soon decided that that was a dead loss.

When the ZX81 was introduced into the market, Steve decided not to buy. However, when the spectrum came out, he must have been one of the first people to buy the new model and despite working full time still, he laboured in earnest to get the most out of this new machine. He dreamed up some good ideas for games and soon found that to achieve the effects he wanted, he needed new techniques. The games on the market at that time were, in his opinion, rather amateurish in many cases. For months, he worked into the small hours of the night perfecting new techniques and eventually produced a game, unlike any that had been written at that time. He submitted it to four software houses and three wanted to market it for him.

At this point, Steve was beginning to feel disillusioned with working for someone else. He decided that after spending over half his life enjoying working on his home computers in his own time, he was ready to become self employed and use his talents for his own benefit. When **Hewson Consultants** offered him a contract, he decided to start working full time on writing software for home computers.



Steve Turner

The game he wrote, *3D Space Wars* took about five months to develop. Most of the time was spent in detailed graphic design and of course in developing the new techniques needed for this powerful game. Since then, Steve has developed *3D Seiddab Attack*. This took three months to produce, most of which was spent designing it. Using many of the techniques learned with *3D Space Wars* the actual writing took less time than its predecessor.

Now Steve is concentrating on another new game, called *Lunar Attack*. So far it has taken three months development and involves a lot more than either of the two previous games, because Steve is using the full potential of the 48K Sepctrum for the first time. Previously, the graphics had been compromised so that the games would run on a 16K Spectrum.

Steve has other ideas which at this stage he is not prepared to divulge. The market for home computer software, Steve feels, is going to change, and he would like to see the whole standard of software improve. He would like to see more arcade quality programs, professionally produced and less amateur — basic programming which makes up so many at present. The public has often in the past been disappointed by the programs which have not matched in performance the pretty pictures on the boxes.

In the future, Steve thinks that people will expect more and more from programs. He expects more powerful programs with more depth — more like novels than sketches. He sees the welding of the graphical and word type adventure game, so that players can continue for hours with the same program. At present adventures games rarely have any graphics — perhaps just stills. Steve sees no reason why far better graphics cannot be incorporated. In the long term future, Steve predicts a major revolution in the entertainment industry. This would involve in-

teractive entertainment: Instead of watching a film, you'll be able to take part in the film and help set the course of it. The film and TV industries will have to work with the computer industry. Already in the US they are starting to use later disc technology for the storage of pictures. This forms a background to the storyline which is handled by a computer.

As a force on the market, Steve soon realised that his impact would be greater if he could employ others of his own calibre. He also would find it beneficial to be able to bounce ideas off someone with the same technical expertise. So he invited 23 year old Andrew Braybrook to work with him.

Andrew worked at Marconi in Chelmsford, where he was a trainee programmer in the computer centre. Using CMS, CICS and Cobol, but few assemblers, he worked with a suite of IBMs. After four years he had become a trainee analyst and programmer. He had always written computer games in his spare time, using Cobol to throw up games rather than text on the firm's computers.

After two years at this job, his Dad bought Andrew a ZX81, and he began to dabble in Basic. Andrew bought himself a Dragon 32 which he found preferable with its better keyboard and colours to play with. He saw Steve Turner's work and became interested in it. He began to try to collate his ideas on the Dragon to see



Andrew Braybrook (left) and Steve Turner

what could be achieved.

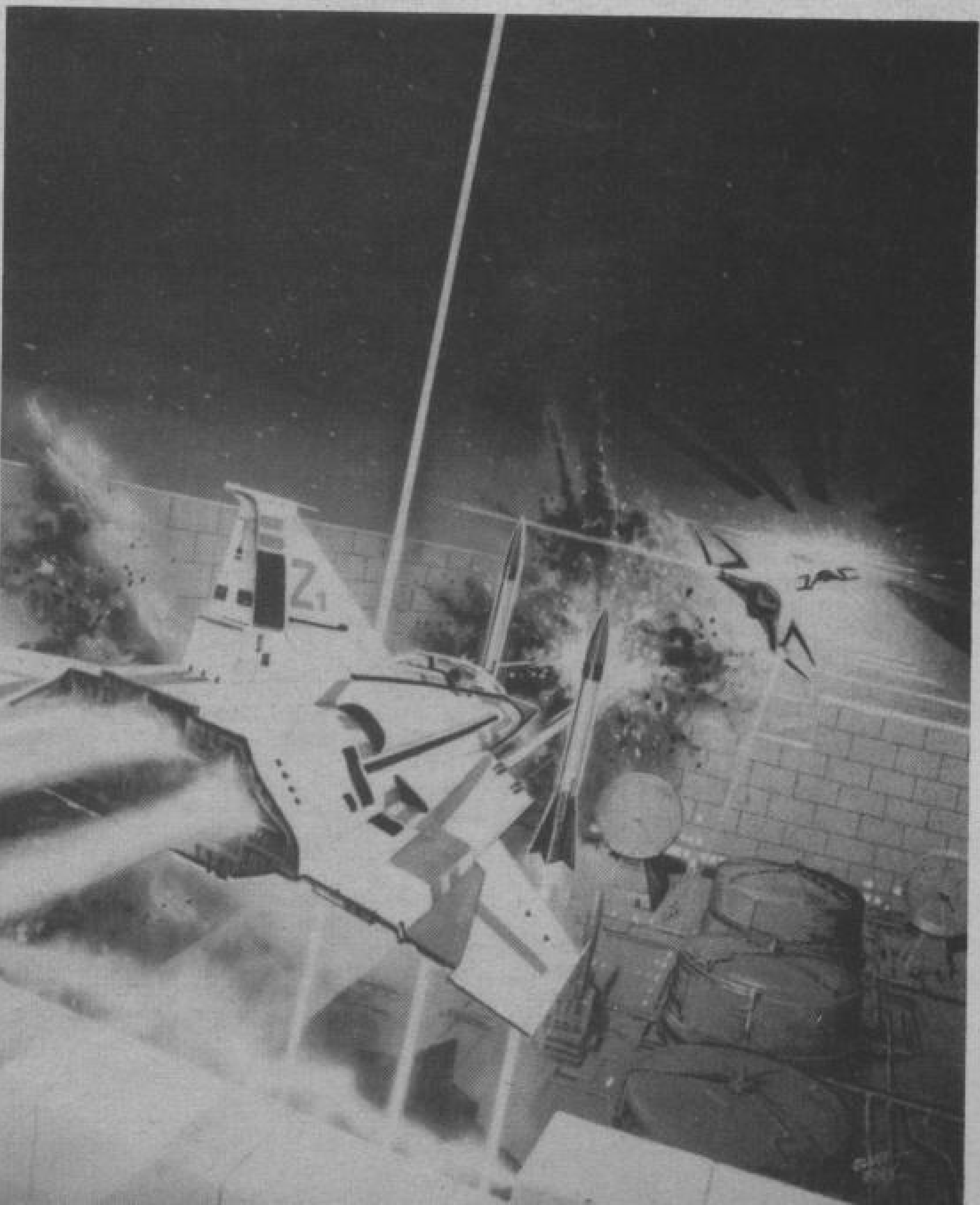
Three months ago Steve offered Andrew the chance to join up with him in his business and Andrew took it up without a second thought. Now his computing skills are more obvious and appreciated than when he worked in a big company, which gives Andrew a lot of satisfaction.

Steve and Andrew find that in the first stages of designing a game, they work mostly individually, with a strong competitive spirit to produce the best idea. In the final stages of game design they work together with plenty of discussion as they fine-tune their games. Steve works for the most part on the Spectrum, whilst Andrew works on the Dragon. They are each experts on their own prefered machines, yet don't really know each others machine. On the whole, Steve does most of the graphical design work and Andrew works more on the programming techniques. Andrew feels that the market for Dragon software is very undeveloped with plenty of room for his exciting programs.

Design is problematic. It is not easy to dream up a good idea. Steve doesn't think it is the sort of thing you can teach anyone. He doesn't think there are any rules. He wonders if in the long run it needs a different sort of person to come up with the ideas. He gets some of his ideas from the pub on a Sunday!

Steve is quite happy to leave the distribution and marketing to the experts at Hewson's, so that he can concentrate on the artistic part of producing the games. He feels that the talent needed to come up with these brilliant games is perhaps not the same as that needed by a skilled artist, but that perhaps the home computer game is a difficult medium to use with just as many challenges as paint and canvas. Ultimately we like to see something nice on the screen. He wonders if one day his work will be displayed as 20th century art in art galleries? I wonder what games will emerge when Steve enters his abstract period??

Head for the Star zone



At the 9th. ZX Microfair in December, **Starzone's** game *Zaxxan* caused quite a stir when it appeared on the Crash Micro Games Action stand. The game on which it is based is, of course, the famous arcade 3D scramble game Zaxxon. Since it showed up in British arcades (and rarely at that) Zaxxon has become a bit of a cult. Naturally Spectrum owners were eagerly awaiting the inevitable appearance of a version for their machine. Months went by — nothing. Was everyone frightened of doing what would be a very difficult program on the Spectrum? It seemed so. But then a brand new name, **Starzone**, appeared with a small black and white ad for their **Zaxxan**.

Starzone is not a big, financially well-heeled company at all, in fact they are four young men with an average age of only 17.5, and Starzone, which has operated at a profit and continues to do so, was started with hardly any money at all. **David Cowell** (the oldest at 19) disarmingly told us that the basic idea had been to raise insurance money for cars, which could be done cheaper through a company! David refers to himself as Starzone's Coordinator. **Tim Lake** (18) is the Advertising and Promotions manager, which leaves brothers **Tim Mardon** and **Nial Mardon**.



The Starzone team — top: brothers Tim and Nial Mardon, bottom: Tim Lake and David Cowell.

Tim, also 18, describes his function as a sort of accountant, whilst the youngest of the group, Nial (15) is the senior programmer. It was Nial who wrote *Zaxxan*.

The three older members are between school and university and intend continuing with their education despite the company, while Nial is still at Abingdon school. As they talked, it became apparent that the common link is Abingdon School (near Oxford), where the other three were also in attendance. One of their other games, *Dalek Dan*, has been written by another pupil at Abingdon, **Malcolm Salmon2. David added, rather apologetically, that the third game,** *River Raider*, just happens to be by another Abingdonite. We began to suspect that Abingdon is trying to rival Liverpool as Silicon Chip Hill!

All four members of Starzone have computer programming experience but Nial is the most experienced in Z80 machine code. He used to own a TRS 80 and had developed a 'Scramble' type game for it, but when the Spectrum came out he bought one and the first program done for it was *Zaxxan*. As the TRS 80 and Spectrum both work on the Z80 processor, there was little problem for Nial in adapting to the needs of the Spectrum.

Zaxxan was in fact ready quite some time back, but the boys' 'A' levels held up operations, so that the game was only ready to market in September. Test ads proved there was a market for it, and now they have commissioned full colour artwork for the inlay cards.

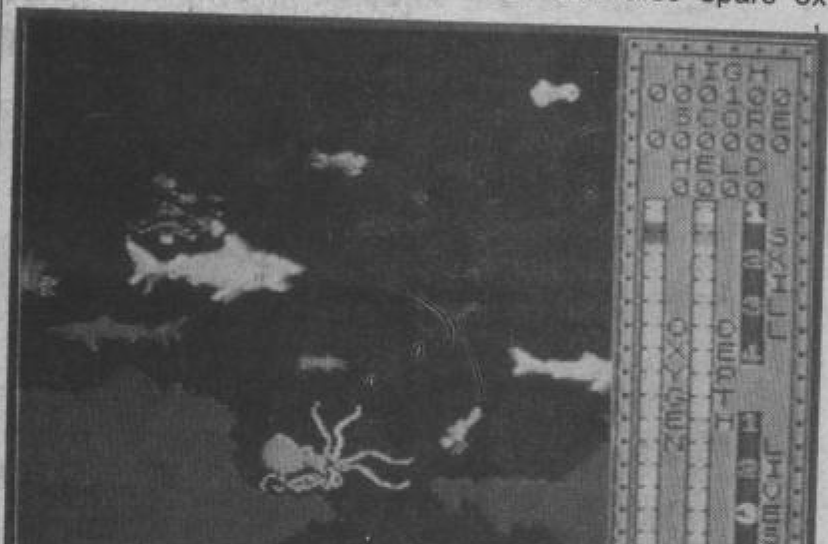
Meanwhile Nial is working flat out on a new game with the working title of *Supercharger*. It's a 'Pole Position' type game. At the ZX Microfair they had a good chance to look at all the various competitors in the field and decided that no one has yet come up with the definitive Spectrum version. Nial is 'subcontracting' the title screen and sound effects, which are intended to be spectacular, and he is aiming for a highly playable game incorporating features like humpback bridges, tunnels with only headlamps seen, a suspension bridge, hills, bends, an ambulance to watch out for, and the best 3D perspective view yet seen. There will be a hi and lo gear change with ice on the road as an extra hazard to the other cars. He's also looking into the possibility of rain (giveaway mackintoshes with every cassette perhaps?)

Meanwhile the Starzone team — a very calm bunch too — sit (metaphorically) and wait for the reaction to *Zaxxan*. They got a mixed reception at the ZX Microfair with people either loving it or complaining it wasn't enough like the original. 'People are very unrealistic in their expectations of the Spectrum,' said David Cowell philosophically. But their *Zaxxan* remains the only version, and it's a very good one. Let's hope University doesn't entirely swamp their programming energies. We mustn't be complacent, we need new writing talent all the time.

Scuba Dive

Producer: **Durell**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Mike Richardson**

With their latest release, **Durell,** who brought you *Harrier Attack* and our **Established Game of the Month** in the last issue, *Jungle Trouble,* claim for it that it sets a new standard for animated graphics for the Spectrum computer. A rather high-handed claim, but one that seems amply justified by seeing *Scuba Dive.* If you're one of those people who squirm with primordial horror at the sight of Great White sharks, then stay well clear of this game! The state of animated graphics in this highly original game is every bit as good as anything you will see in the arcades, and the jaws agape sharks look pretty real.



A plethora of fishy animation in Scuba Dive.

The basic object of *Scuba Dive* is to leap off your boat, dive down and collect pearls from oysters on the sea bed. If you think it sounds easy forget it! This is no game for beginners of the arcade art. For a start off, the sea is alive with fish of all shapes and sizes, from giant sharks and squids right down to tiny fish swimming in shoals, and if you've ever fallen for Jacques Cousteau's line that they are really very cuddly, you can forget that too! These guys are all killers.

When you press the appropriate key, one of your three divers leaps out of the boat and can then be guided down to the rocky sea bed. If he runs into it he gets knocked out for a few seconds, and killed if it happens immediately again. The pearls can be collected only from open oysters. To the right of the display area is a status section which records how much oxygen is used up. It's replenished by surfacing and finding the boat, which wanders off on its own. Only by touching the ladder at the rear of the boat are you safely aboard and ready to dive again.

Also on the sea bed, are hollows, actually openings to undersea caves. These are protected by an octopus, whose waving tentacles allow a precarious access. Should you get through, the bottom of the cave is covered with giant clams, whose pearls are more valuable, but the clams have a nasty habit of snapping shut on you! This cave in turn also has hollow accesses to deeper caves protected by an octopus each. The deepest caves contain treasure chests and also spare oxygen bottles to keep you going. And that's it. You score points for pearls brought to the boat but if you get knocked out or eaten, you lose the pearls you may have collected. The four skill levels affect your scores, numbers of sea creatures, oxygen supply and the speed at which the octopusses move as well as other details.

CRITICISM

'This is an original game with excellent colour and graphics, although it's a shame about the almost non-existent sound. The fishy graphics are fantastic (one tends to get into trouble while admiring the various forms of marine life)'! The game isn't very addictive, and I would have thought there could have been more to do like harpooning sharks, but anyway, I liked it!'

'The detail of the graphics is quite staggering. Not only are they large, but they're also realistically very small. The sharks have a lot of frames to make the movement work, including a very good turning action. The game is full of nasty touches like the giant jelly fish which float on the surface and hide behind the boat waiting to catch a diver as he jumps off. The diver's movement, too, is just wonderful, both in diving off and in swimming. A bit of continous sound, the effect of breathing bubbles perhaps, would have been a help, but to be honest, this game doesn't need much help. Like Jungle Trouble *I found it to be immensely addictive — it should probably be banned as a health risk before it has time to take off! Great!'*

'Despite the simplicity of the controls (user-defined keys too) this is not an easy game to play, and on the higher skill levels it's downright maddening. This really shows what a bit of dedication can do in turning Spectrum graphics into something to be proud of. The game is also about as addictive as any around I've played recently.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: rotate clockwise/anticlockwise, accelerate and break. As preprogammed very sensible, but may be used-defined to cope with almost any joystick
Joystick: with user-defined keys you can set up for most joysticks
Keyboard play: once you get the hang, very responsive
Colour: excellent
Graphics: words fail
Sound: poor
Skill levels: 4
Lives: 3 divers
Features: a neat feature enables you to save just the hi-scores and then load them in to continue
General rating: highly recommended and excellent value for money

Use of computer	89%
Graphics	98%
Playability	90%
Getting started	89%
Addictive qualities	90%
Value for money	98%
Overall	**92%**

Battle 1917

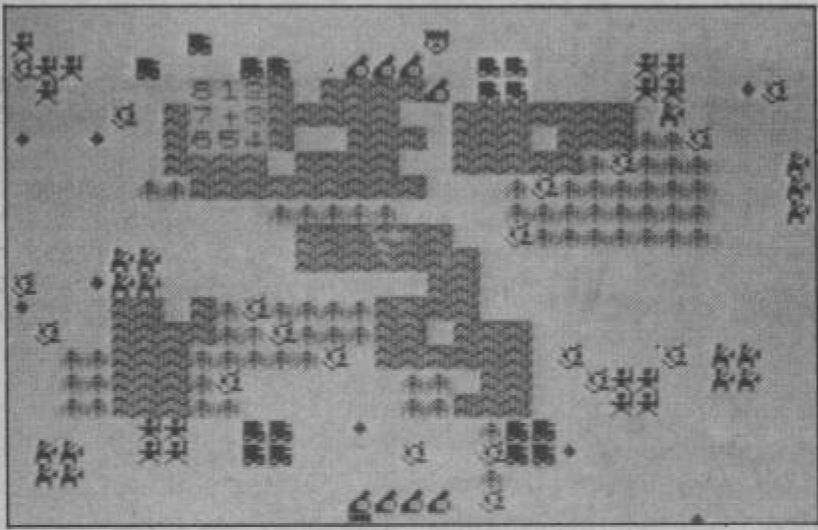
Producer: **C.C.S.**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.00**
Language: **Basic**
Author: **Mark Lucas**

The author, **Mark Lucas,** won the Cambridge Award for writing this program. The competition is run by C.C.S. in conjuinctiuon with the magazine *Sinclair User,* and the Award plus £1000 goes to the winner, and of course the winner receives the satisfaction of seeing the program marketed. *Battle 1917* is likely to prove popular with wargamers and perhaps with chess players too, as there is a resemblance in part.

The board, or war zone, is laid out with the opposing forces at the top and bottom of the screen. Each side has a King in the centre, protected by artillery and flanked by tanks, cavalry and infantry. Each unit, except the King, is subdivided into four characters. The characters move as a group, but can easily get split up by the terrain. Each unit also has a fighting strength and a movement allowance.

The battlefield, 21 by 32 squares large, is dotted with obstacles like rivers, forests, barbed wire and minefields. Tanks aren't bothered by wire or trees, but cannot go through water. The rest can't go across any obstacle. Minefields have a percentage chance of exploding when contacted. In addition to moving around, the artillery can fire in any of the 8 compass points desired, although extreme short range runs a risk of self destruction since shots may not land on the exact square they are supposed to.

A prompt at the bottom of the screen tells each player which piece is to move next and reminds him or her how



Chess meets wargame in award-winning Battle 1917.

many squares it can travel and asks for the direction wanted. When one player has moved all his pieces, it is the second player's turn. When units of opposing forces meet, battle ensues and is won or lost by adding a random figure for each, from one to five, to the unit's official fighting strength. The higher figure wins. The aim of the game is to kill off the oponent's king.

Directions are inputted using the numeric keys 1 to 8, 1 being North and 8 being North-West. There is an onscreen compass prompt as a quick visual aid.

CRITICISM

'If chess appeals to you, you might like this, although it hasn't got the same sort of tactical clarity as chess. I thought the graphics were rather average and the moves and goings on rather slow. At least it does allow two people to compete against each other — really the computer is only used as a playing board and score keeper. It might have been a good idea to have a single player versus the computer option — after all you have to have an oponent also addicted to play properly and that's not always so easy.'

It does take quite a long time to play — but then, so does chess. Whether it's as good as chess, I'm not so sure. It has more variety than chess but also a strong element of luck as to who wins a battle. This does rather destroy the tactical value somewhat. It certainly isn't what you would call an addictive game, and I think you would have to play for some time in two before deciding whether it had real lasting value as a game.

'Definitely a game for the strategy, wargamer freaks. I'm sure it has lots of scope for them. It left me cold as I never quite know how to take this sort of game. The graphics are pretty good, although only character squares which vanish in one spot to reappear in another, nothing is really animated. It does have very amusing instructions in the 2-part load which involve some graphical shenanigans.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 1-8
Colour: quite good
Graphics: fairly small but recognisable
Sound: very little
General rating: good of its kind, but a specialised taste

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	54%
Playability	58%
Getting started	65%
Addictive qualities	55%
Value for money	68%
Overall	63%

OMEGA RUN

Producer: **C.R.L.**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **;Richard Brisbourne**

We're at war again and fanatical elements have seized control of a heavily defended complex containing the ultimate nuclear deterrent, a Doomsday device constructed to cause worldwide devastation. The timer on this bomb has already started and is set to explode in twenty-five minutes. You must pilot your fighter bomber to the building and destroy it.

Omega Run hovers between being a flight simulation and a straightforward game, but in the end, due to the fantasy nature of the

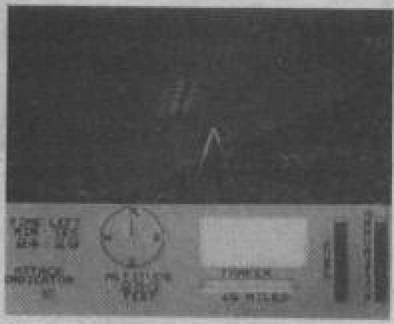
scenario and the fact that the instrumentation is not based on anything actual, we decided to slot this under a game heading.

The screen displays a wide cockpit view with instruments below. The enemy's defences are prodigious and consist of laser fields, which shoot beams up into the sky, and which must be avoided by dodging around them; fighter aircraft, which may be dodged but should be shot down otherwise they just keep on your tail; anti-aircraft fire which homes in on you if you fly above 350 feet; and ground-to-air missiles, which are more frequent lower down. Another problem is that your aircraft carries insufficient fuel for the run, so you must rendez-vous with a tanker for in-flight refuelling.

Your instrumentation provides a clock with minutes and seconds left before the Doomsday bomb explodes, a compass with your heading indicated, an altitude meter, a tanker/target locator, which is kept centred for an accurate heading, a miles-to-tanker/target indicator, and three bar codes for fuel level, ammunition level and damages status. There is also a rear view screen warning of enemy fighters with message display.

CRITICISM

'Omega Run' has an excellent on-screen introduction, which not only describes the object of the game fully, but demonstrates the instruments, how they work, and what the cockpit view looks like when you are flying in various aspects. All the instruction screens dissolve one from another like in a film, and when it's all through you can then alter the conditions, like distance to target, numbers of enemy fighters and laser fields, and target run up.



Lining up a shot on an enemy fighter.

It keeps you on your toes okay, fighters, lasers, ack-ack, missiles, all coming thick and faster as you near the target, which is a red block. The instruments simplify your task and are very well designed. I liked the view, a dark blue, flecked with white, as though you were flying over the sea at night. The sky seems to light up when the AA guns are firing at you. Perhaps it's asking too much, but it would have been nice to see enemy aircraft firing back at you! As it is, the screen flashes when they are. I found it highly addictive to play with plenty of scope for improving skill. What would be good in one of these flight games, is if they used a perspective grid to indicate the ground in lieu of any realistic landscape, that would really increase the feeling of speed.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors and zero to fire
Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek
Keyboard play: very responsive
Colour: very good
Graphics: very good, with effective 3D
Sound: good effects
Skill levels: 5 selectable, with additional customisation
Lives: percentage of damage allowed
General rating: playable, addictive and recommended.

Use of computer	78%
Graphics	90%
Playability	83%
Getting started	96%
Addictive qualities	82%
Value for money	90%
Overall	87%

MAGIC MEANIES

Producer: **C.D.S.**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**

This game is a good copy of an old arcade favourite, on the whole a not much copied game as yet. **Blaby** did a version, called *Gold Digger*, and in most respects this is very similar, although it boasts a rather splendid continuous music sound track.

The object of the game is to control your little wizard Meltec through underground caverns which he himself creates as he goes. Dotted about are lumps of lead, resembling blue diamonds, which are to be collected for points. There are also red apples (underground?) which can be pushed along an existing tunnel and made to squash the meanies by dropping them down a shaft, or one can be used to block a tunnel by undermining it. Meanies can also be killed by firing one of your five crystal balls at them. Killing meanies adds to your points. There's also a cherry on each screen which must be collected. This goes wandering about the place in a most distracted, not to say distracting manner.

Clearing a screen of lead and cherry takes you on a level to more meanies.

CRITICISM

'Cutting out the story of wizards good and evil and dark ages when they spent their efforts obtaining lead to transmute into gold, which sounds like an adventure game, *Magic Meanies* is an arcade game. It's only a reasonable game, but it's fun to play.' '

'The graphics are quite small, one-character size and they move quite jerkily, but they are called on to do very little, since much of the game's attraction lies in the skill and quick thinking required. Once on the move your man can only be stopped by running up against an apple, or by constantly reversing his direction. It's a simple game but manages to be addictive in playing. Nice, bright colours, and an insistent and continuous music track that can be turned off if it's driving anyone else mad!'

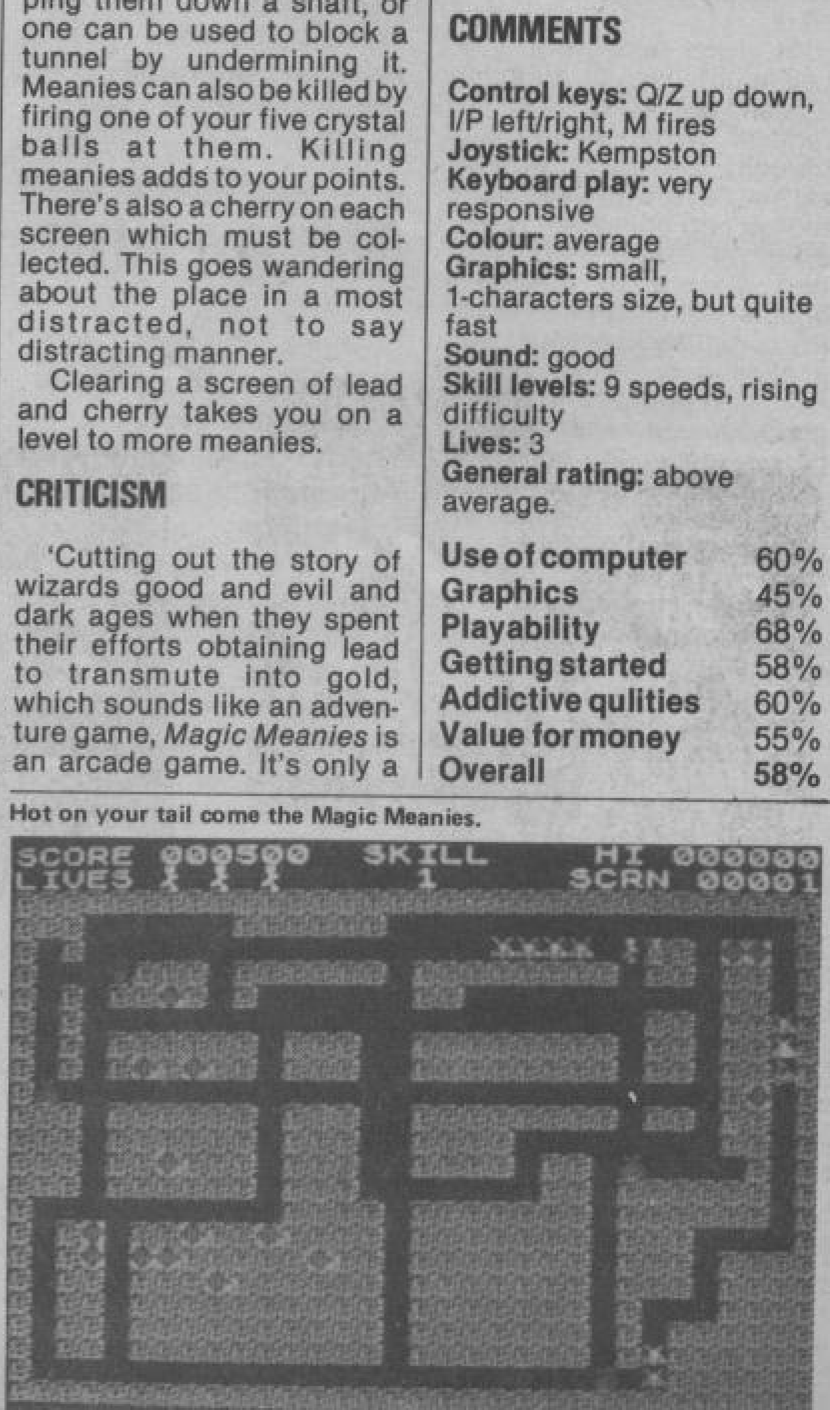
'Despite the simplicity of this type of game, it isn't easy to play, requiring quick reflexes. C.D.S. have also provided nine playing speeds as well as rising skill levels. At the slowest speed the game can become a bit repetetive, but at medium fast it is quite demanding. The highest speed level is sheer madness. Fairly addictive, and a good version.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/Z up down, I/P left/right, M fires
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: very responsive
Colour: average
Graphics: small, 1-characters size, but quite fast
Sound: good
Skill levels: 9 speeds, rising difficulty
Lives: 3
General rating: above average.

Use of computer	60%
Graphics	45%
Playability	68%
Getting started	58%
Addictive qulities	60%
Value for money	55%
Overall	58%

Hot on your tail come the Magic Meanies.



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IMAGINE-ATION

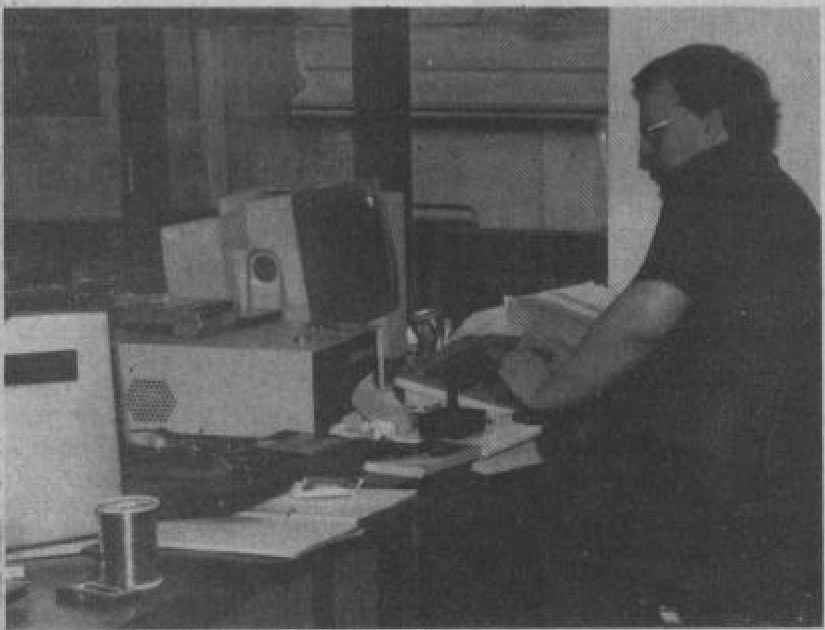
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'locked away' to work on *Bandersnatch* which should be ready sometime around May.

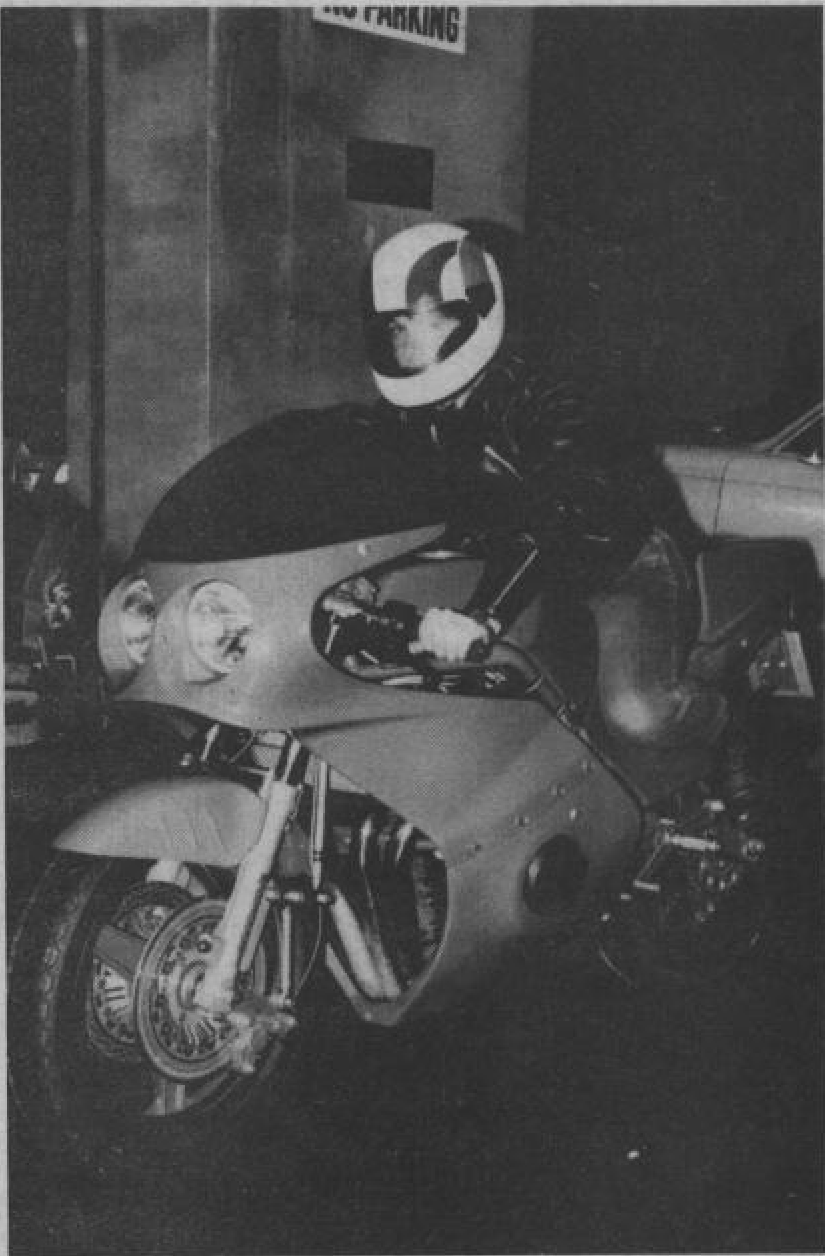
When the game is finished it gets 'play-tested' by a panel of 20 local games players which Imagine uses. Their recommendations will then be used to make alterations to the game before it can be released.

From the quiet, carpeted splendour of the main office, Bruce Everiss explained that Imagine have had to employ a lot of top management experts in recent months to guide the company as it expands. Between these new managers there are a lot of degrees in science, psychology and business management. They know an awful lot about computers and software, but very little about games. To fill in this gap in their experience it seems **CRASH** Magazine is being used as a 'training manual'!

Just as Epstein and the Beatles created an awareness in Liverpool and then throughout the world about popular British music, so the guiding hand of Bruce Everiss and Imagine have created an awareness first in Liverpool and now throughout the world about British games software.



A corner of Imagine's Technical support.



Millionaire founder, **Mark Butler**, thunders from his custom-built monster bike.



LETTERS

continued from page 10

ATIC ACRASH

I am writing to you for advice. I would like to know why, when I load ATIC ATAC with my Currah Microspeech unit plugged in, the game crashes when I press 0 to start. The Currah advertisement states that ATIC ATAC and LUNAR JETMAN are usable. LUNAR JETMAN works, so why doesn't ATIC ATAC? Hope you can help me.

M. Beynon, Ryton, Tyne & Wear.

I think if you read through the review on the Currah Microspeech unit in this issue, you will be able to see why ATIC ATAC crashes when played with the unit in the Spectrum. I'm only a key pusher myself, and I don't know what goes on inside these things at all! What's more surprising is that the Currah ad does state that ATIC ATAC is compatible. I'll check into this, but I suspect the reason is simply that agreements were reached between the Currah people and various software houses that certain games would use the faciffty. ATIC ATAC was a little delayed in its release, and I think there may have been alterations made at the last moment to fit the program into 48K which made it impossible to play with the Microspeech unit. But of course, by that time the Currah ads were already in magazines.
LM

WHY SO MUCH?

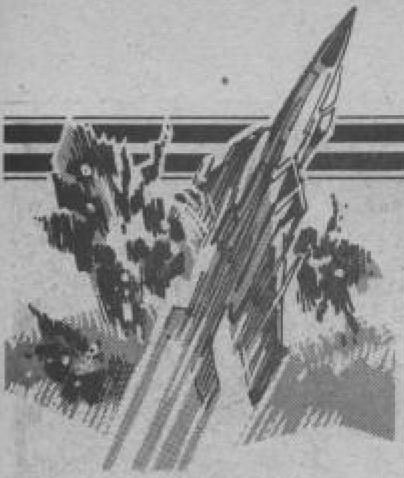
Why do software houses have to charge so much for their software tapes? Most tapes are priced around five to six pounds, for that you usually get a few minutes of tape with a program recorded once or twice on each side. For around the same price you can purchase a music cassette with much more value for money.

Congratulations, CRASH is fantastic, it is just what people need to read before they spend their money on computer tapes.

S. Hall, Blackbrook, Derbyshire.

It isn't really fair to compare a music cassette with a software one. Even a reasonable music album is expected to sell about half a million copies in its life time — chart toppers sell several times that. According to unofficial figures approximately 25 million software cassettes were sold in the last 12 months or something like the equivalent of 15 top selling music albums. As you know, there were many more than 15 Spectrum games last year! What it means, is that an individual title, even a popular one, isn't selling in the quantities a music cassette sells in, and don't forget, the majority of Spectrum cassettes are sold only in the UK. Now if you look at how the 'cake' is sliced up, as they say, take a tape costing £5.95. Knock of the VAT to leave a price of £5.17. Of course the software house doesn't get that — by the time the retail shop, wholesaler and distributor have taken their cut the software house receives about 40% of the price, or £2.07. Off this they must dock the cost of duplication, cassette and box and inlay printing, say 50p. Then they are paying the author a royalty on the selling price of probably 10% (52p) which leaves them with £1.05. Out of this 'profit' must come the cost of advertising and the overhead costs associated with running any business like salaries, rent etc. As you can imagine, at the end of the day the software house isn't left with all that much. Of course, if they could sell a million on one title alone, it might be a different picture!
LM





Fighter Pilot

Producer: **Digital Integration**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Dave Marshall**

If you have ever hesitated over buying a flight simulation program on the grounds that it will be too slow to make an interesting game, **Fighter Pilot** will probably change your attitude (or should that be altitude)? This simulation moves at 802 knots (at sea level, full reheat) and can create total panic at a moment's notice! The game allows one player to control a jet fighter plane in several modes, which include landing, taking-off and air-to-air combat.

Your machine is a McDonnell Douglas F15 Eagle with 2 Pratt & Whitney F 100-PW-100 turbofan power plants, and the program writers claim that the simulation is as realistic as limitations of the computer allow. When loaded you are presented with a menu; **1)** Landing Practice **2)** Flying Training **3)** Air-toAir Combat practice **4)** Air-to-Air Combat **5)** Blind Landing **6)** Cross Winds & Turbulence **7)** Skill levels **8)** Control selection.

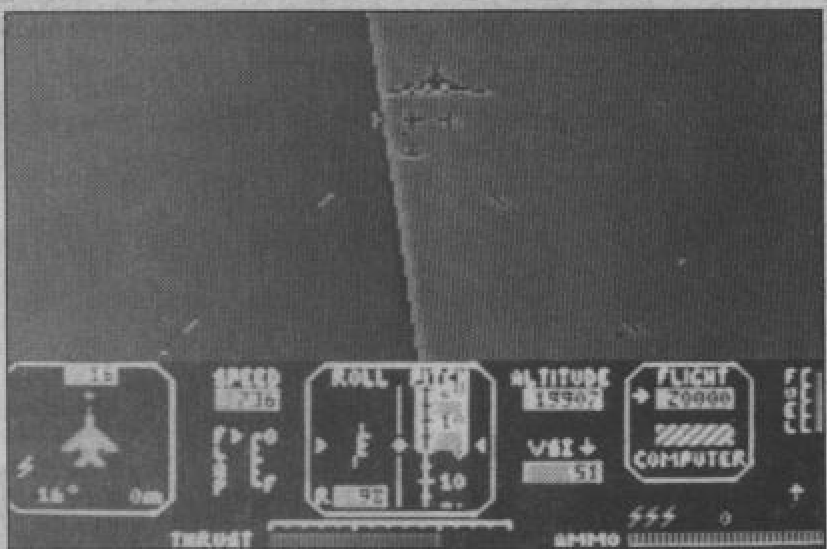
Before we take a look at the options more closely, let's examine the aircraft's equipment. In the centre of the instrument panel is the **Artificial Horizon**, showing the roll angle and pitch angle. An aircraft symbol rotates to show wing angle relative to the ground, and a moving tape in degrees indicates whether the aircraft is flying nose up or nose down. When it's blue you're flying nose up, when it's yellow, nose down. To the left of the AH is the **speed indicator** in knots. To the right is the **Altitude** in feet and below is the **VSL** — Vertical Speed Indicator, which gives rate of climb or descent in feet per second. Below the airspeed instrument are the **flaps**, and below the AH is the **engine thrust** indicator,a bar scale running from 0% to 100% with a red section for reheat. This boosts the engine but uses up much more fuel. There is also a radar and compass with beacon selection, and an **ILS/Flight Computer**. The Instrument Landing System offers runway approach guidance or it can be switched to Flight Computer to show your precise ground position from any beacon within a 6 mile radius. It also indicates the altitude of an enemy aircraft when in combat mode. The remaining instruments are a fuel guage and beneath it, the undercarriage indicator, showing up or down.

To control your aircraft there are fifteen control keys, although fortunately these are not used all at once! Joystick left, back, forward and right is controlled by the cursors (or by a joystick!) and CAPS SHIFT/Z moves the rudder left and right. Q/A increases or decreases engine thrust, W/A puts the flaps up or down, U raises and lowers the undercarriage, B puts the brakes on and is indicated on the instrument panel as a red light. N selects the next beacon and M switches the cockpit view to a map. SYMBOL SHIFT switches between ILS and Flight Computer, and finally zero fires the guns when incombat mode, which is selected by pressing G.

Back to the menu. Selecting **Landing Practice** immediately positions you at 1700 feet and 6 miles from touch down with the undercarriage down. In **Flying Training** you are on the end of the runway and ready to take off. **Air-to-Air Combat Practice** positions you two miles behind an enemy aircraft and you catch up, select combat mode and open fire when he appears in your sights. The enemy will not fire back — at least, not until you opt for staightforward **Air-to-Air Combat**. In this scenario you must defend four airfields; you are scrambled, must locate the enemy with your radar and engage. He will lock on to you when there is less than a mile and 5000 feet altitude difference between you. Four strikes from him is fatal. If you break off the enemy will pursue his mission once again, and you may find the airfield damaged. The remaining option, **Blind Landing**, renders your viewscreen useless, and forces you to land on instruments only.

There are three skill levels, Trainee/Squadron Leader/Ace to choose from. Kempston, Sinclair, AGF/Protek joysticks or keyboard are selectable.

The display through the windscreen is fairly simple, green ground, blue sky. The other features are the runways of the four air bases named BASE, TANGO, DELTA and ZULU. These are seen in full, correct perspective with centre lines, distance markers and end lights. Additionally, you can see enemy aircraft as you approach, also in full perspective. The tape is accompanied by very clear instructions and technical details.



Air-to-air combat in this 800 knot-fast simulation.

CRITICISM

'A full evaluation of **Fighter Pilot**, would take an age as the program has enormous potential for playing. Also, flying my F15 was not an easy task. The set up for landing sounds soothingly simple. But in eight initial attempts we nose-dived with loss of all aboard! I had a go at a dog fight. It took some time to find my enemy — getting the hang of banking and turning takes time — but when I did we had a jolly time and I went down in flames after a few hectic seconds. I'm going back for more!'

'The map facility is excellent in this game. An advantage is that you can switch to map without losing your instruments — you can see where you are and keep flying, rather important at 800 knots! The map provides a scale, locations of the airfields and their beacons, which can be selected by number to get the correct heading, and it shows two ranges of mountains with their heights. What struck me about this simulation is its overall speed. You can sit back and relax to some degree on the longer training flight, but mostly it's hard work and it all happens pretty fast. Very good resolution on the graphics and instrument diusplays.'

'Definately the best simulation for the Spectrum yet, and one of the most exciting to play. Key control is a fraction slow, you have to keep a key pressed for results, but with so many keys that's not surprising. What does work well is that the instruments respond very well with quite a lot of fine tuning possible. I'm no pilot, but I reckon this is all very realistic.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: see review
Joystick: see review
Colour: very good
Graphics: very good
Sound: none
Skill levels: 3
Lives: 1 — how many more do you want?
General rating: an excellent simulation and game — highly recommended.

Use of computer	82%
Graphics	90%
Playability	85%
Getting started	90%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	85%
Overall	86%

HIGH STREET SPOTLIGHT

FLYING HIGH



Much of the phenomenal interest in home computers has to do with their exposure in the high streets of Britain, and few chain stores have done as much to promote that interest as W.H. Smith and J. Menzies. This month our roving reporter took a whirlwind trip a round sum of W.H. Smith's bigger computer shops

John Rowland the Buying Manager for W.H. Smith, who heads a dynamic young team, says that the home computer has transformed the present-buying market this year. A nice story involves an eight year old computer customer who, annoyed by the proximity of the toy department, asked for it to be moved away so he could concentrate on more serious keyboard matters. The home computer also seems to have broken down what are thought of as traditional socio-economic pigeon holes, which is to say, the North is poor and unemployed and so can't afford such luxuries.

"Our strongest selling computer shops are in the principle provincial towns," says John Rowland. "Newcastle, in fact, is the biggest selling shop, but Birmingham, Edinburgh, Manchester and Sheffield are also very big." It underlines two points, firstly that there is more unemployment in the North, and games players there have more time on their hands, but secondly, that people in the North have as much interest in computers as anywhere else — perhaps even more. Manchester and Liverpool, for instance, are very important centres of software development, and in each of those cities W.H. Smith have busy and well laid out areas devoted especially to computers and software. The Spectrum is the biggest selling item — hardware and software accounting for approximately 45% of the market.

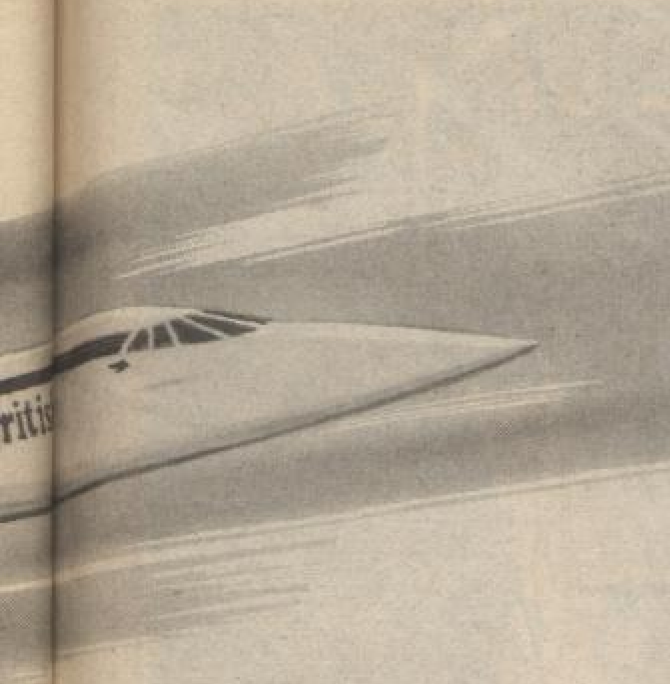
In London the W.H. Smith in **Hammersmith** (situated in the new shopping precinct) has a large computer shop. Like banks, shops are very much an extension of the manager. At Hammersmith the manager is **Jack Cox**. Hammersmith was one of the first stores in Britain where W.H. Smith thought of trying out 'electronic leisure'. Thanks largely to Jack's efforts it proved to be a rip-roaring success. But Jack isn't what you would immediately think of as a computer entrepeneur. He happens to be a grandfather, not in the age group normally associated with computer freakism. His grand-daughter is though, and some of her interest has rubbed off so that now Jack Cox is fully fascinated by the subject. The computer shop at Hammersmith is more fully staffed than any other individual department in the shop. He reckons that the thing which outshines their competitors is that they put a strong emphasis on training staff to be helpful. Jack is aware that the most with-it people are the kids. Among his Saturday staff is a youngster who proved to be so knowledgeable that the boy is now training the older staff — including Jack Cox himself.

A wholly new and rather surprising ven-



Bill Rowe, (left) and his successor, **Roy Hawker**, discuss some display matters at the Heathrow computer shop.







The new **WH Smith Computer Shop,** at London's Heathrow airport — serving travel-weary computer freaks.

ture is W.H. Smith computer shops in the departure lounges of airports. To date they have units at Terminals 1 and 2 at Heathrow. These have been built with the absolute co-operation of the British Airports Authority and have been going now for three months. Once the go-ahead was given WH Smith's own fitting department moved in and built the purpose-designed units in only eight weeks. They have special glass shutters so that when they are closed at night travellers can still see as much as they can during the day.

The units have proved very successful and receipts are described as "really very good". There have even been several incidents when an individual has spent over £1000 at a go! The man who has set up and organised these airport concessions is **Bill Rowe**, but he is now moving on and from March **Roy Hawker** takes over responsibility. Other airports are under consideration, both W.H. Smith and the BAA convinced that they will do as well in other locations.

It might seem surprising that computer shops at airports should prove so popular, but perhaps a bigger surprise is that a customer profile indicates that a large percentage of customers are businessmen (after all, this is the home computer market). W.H. Smith suspect that there is a large element of 'daddy's lies behind the claims that purchasers are only getting a machine or software for their sons!

The decision to try out computer shops actually inside the terminal lounges was not taken as a complete gamble. Three years ago W.H. Smith had a small shelf devoted to home computers at Heathrow Terminal 2 and the turn over was phenomenal, so they thought it would be a good idea to expand. It certainly seems to have been!

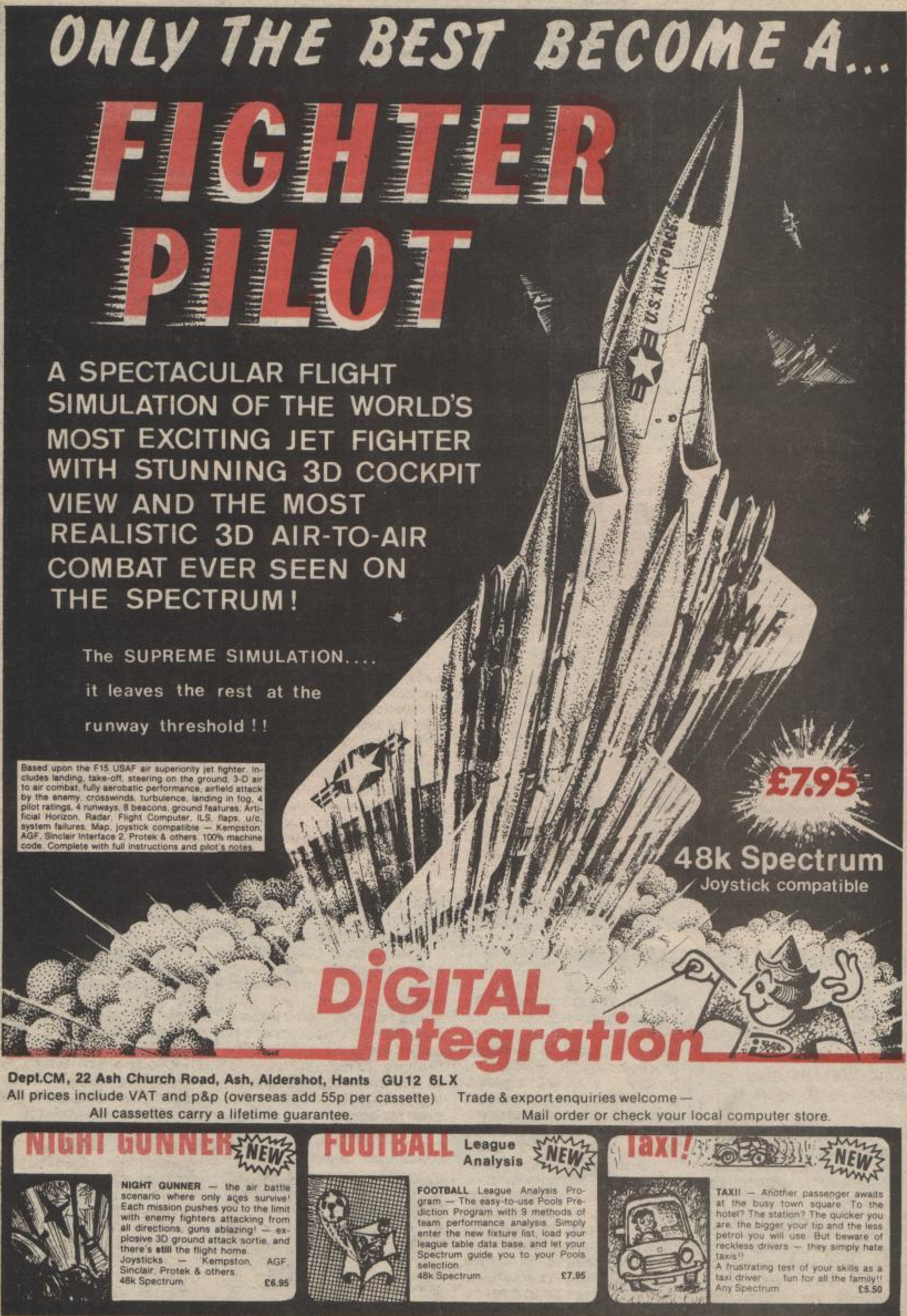
Nevertheless, there is an awareness at WH Smith that the market can be fickle in such areas. Says John Rowland, "If the computer becomes a useful tool then it has a long future. If it's only used as a toy it's not so good. The toy market is renowned for its fads."

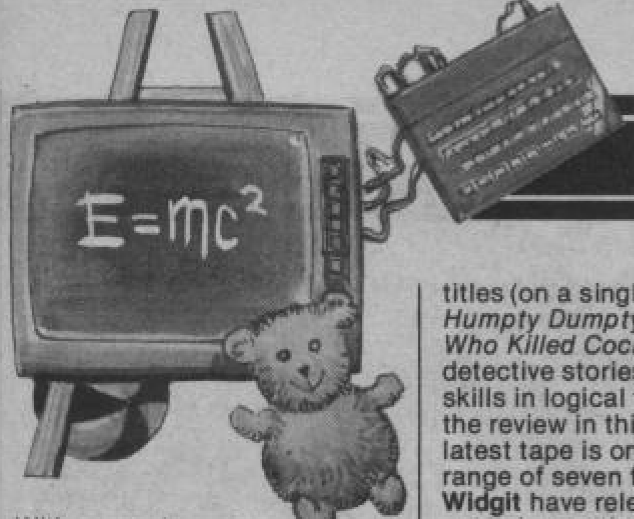
Perhaps the growth of educational software will help ensure the future of the home computer. If John Rowland's experience is anything to go by, the growth of the educational market this coming year is going to be very big. "We are being bombarded by it," he says. "Software publishers of any size seem determined to bring out educational programs."

There are, of course, fads in anything and computers may prove to be no different, but we at **CRASH** believe that the games market is here to stay for a long time, because all sorts of developments are taking place all the while, which will completely revolutionise the games you can buy and the machines you will be able to play them on. Meanwhile, it's down to the retail outlets to provide the opportunities for you to find what you want — even in those boring minutes before take off at Heathrow! W.H. Smith seem very pleased with their new venture and it's certainly **flying high!**



A typically busy day at one of the Computer Shops in a larger WH Smith high street store.


ONLY THE BEST BECOME A...
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NIGHT GUNNER — the air battle scenario where only aces survive! Each mission pushes you to the limit with enemy fighters attacking from all directions, guns ablazing! — explosive 3D ground attack sortie, and there's still the flight home.
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FOOTBALL League Analysis Program — The easy-to-use Pools Prediction Program with 9 methods of team performance analysis. Simply enter the new fixture list, load your league table data base, and let your Spectrum guide you to your Pools selection.
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A frustrating test of your skills as a taxi driver ... fun for all the family!!
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LEARNING AT PLAY

With computers now abounding in British schools, there is a growing awareness that computer games can be much more than a play toy. The computer can act, quite uniquely, as both teacher, calculator, blackboard and entertainer all at the same time. To match the swelling interest in education by computer, more software houses are producing more and more teaching materials in a games form. To reflect this trend **CRASH** will be doing regular articles on educational games and reviewing programs as they become available. These reviews, like all others, will also be entered in the **Guide Section** as we go along.

One of the first software houses to specialise in programs for young children is **Widgit Software**. They have just announced their two newest titles (on a single tape). *The Humpty Dumpty Mystery* and *Who Killed Cock Robin* are two detective stories to develop skills in logical thinking (see the review in this issue). This latest tape is only one of a range of seven titles which **Widgit** have released over the past six months. *Counting, Adding & Subtracting* and *Quickthinking* (which is published by **Mirrorsoft**) are for developing numerical skills. Spatial observation and skills are developed with *Shape Sorter* and *Pathfinder*. A further title in this series will be released before Easter.

There are plans to release more titles early in 1984, and also to convert existing titles to the Commodore 64, BBC Model B and Electron. **Mike** and **Tina Detheridge**, who run **Widgit**, have increased their programming workforce to meet these needs, but they still maintain a very firm editorial control. The programs must meet the **Widgit** criterion of giving the player enjoyment and motivation but at the same time having a real educational content to develop a child intellectually. **Widgit** programs are tried out in schools and are modified according to the reactions of teachers and pupils. Tina says that general standards in educational software have risen a lot in the last few months and that **Widgit** are intending very definitely to keep in the forefront of developments and provide programs of high quality and good value for money for home and school use.

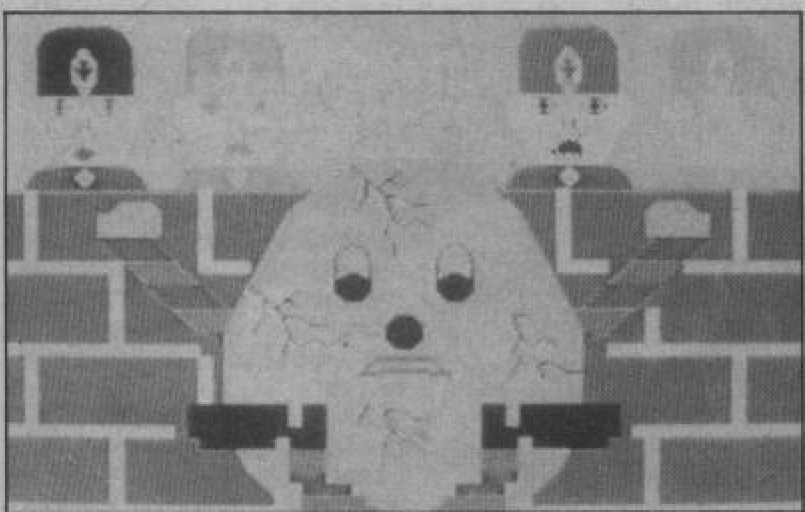
MR. T

It's a bit of a mouthful, but **The National Magazine Co**, under the imprint of **Ebury Software**, are soon planning to release titles under the heading of **Good Housekeeping Software**. The series is tied together by a mascot called **Mr. T**.

The first six titles are *Mr. T's Alphabet Games, Mr. T's Number Games, Mr. T Tells The Time, Mr. T's Money Box, Mr. T's Measuring Games* and *Mr. T's Shape Games*. These are currently available on the BBC Micro, but Spectrum versions should be ready very soon. *Mr. T Tells The Time* and *Mr. T's Money Box* are already in the shops for the Spectrum. The games come very nicely packaged in large white video style boxes and include a detailed parent's manual with comprehensive operating instructions and a step-by-step guide to getting the best out of the program.

Good Housekeeping Software reckon that the child should not be left isolated at the keyboard, but that the parent should join in the games, discussion and activities promoted by the games. **Mr. T** is also designed to act as a friendly guide enabling the child to play not against the cold, inanimate computer, but in the company of a lively and personable fellow who reacts with encouragement or slight dismay at the child's choice.

Mr. T programs are aimed at children between the ages of three and six. The cassettes retail at £12.95, and are available at leading computer shops and computer departments of major High Street retailers, and run on a 48K Spectrum.



The Humpty Dumpty Mystery

Producer: **Widgit**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.25**
Group: **Very early readers — 10 years**

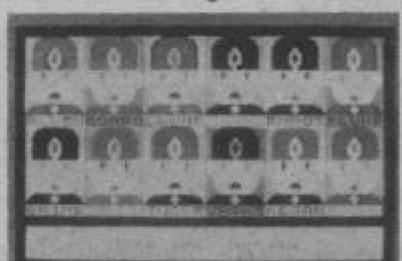
Side A of the tape, *Humpty Dumpty*, contains two programs, and side B contains *Who Killed Cock Robin*. The programs are aimed at developing skills in logical thinking and require the player to ask questions and make guesses based on answers. The mystery —? Which of the king's men pushed Humpty off the wall? After a graphics sequence of Humpty being pushed off by a mystery soldier, all twelve men appear and the player may either ask a question prompted by the words, 'Did he have . . .', or take a guess. Each of the twelve men have a name and some characteristic which distinguishes them, so that asking questions immediately eliminates some of the suspects.

The second game loads with a program contained in game 1. Here the player is given a glimpse of the culprit and must describe him. Five distinguishing characteristics must be entered correctly to describe the colour of the suspect's hat, badge, eyes, mouth and jacket. Both programs allow for children of developed spelling skills, and for early readers as inputs may be spelt out or selected by using the colour keys. Two skill levels make for easier and harder games.

Who Killed Cock Robin asks the daunting question, can sparrow's confession be believed? The player must find out who killed the robin, where and when by using clues and logic. Some reading ability is required and there are four skill levels.

The quality of the graphics in these games is very good, lots of large drawings, brightly coloured and with some simple animation. Describing the identity of the culprit in the second Humpty Dumpty game, is quite a skilfull process, and surprisingly difficult to get right, even for adults!

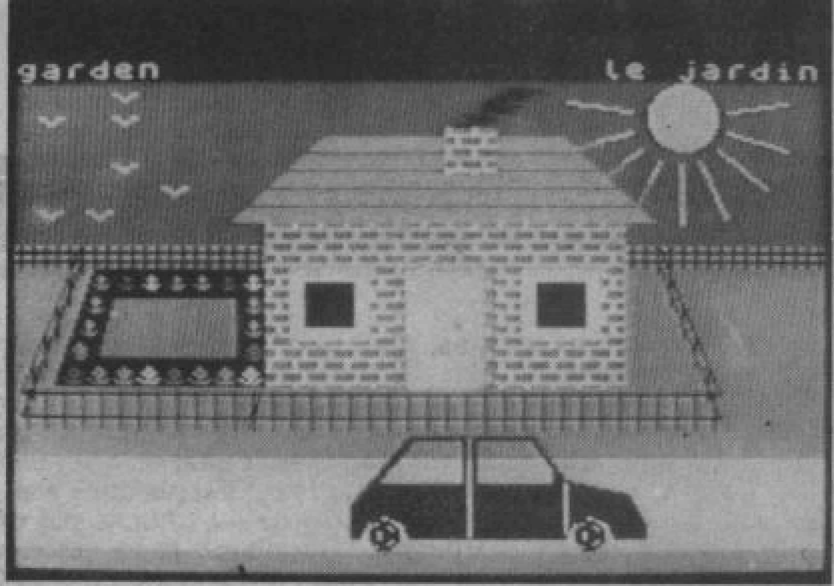
I think it was "large" – but was it?



French Is Fun

Producer: **C.D.S. Microsystems**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Group: **Various**

This is a French learning package with considerable versatility although it only teaches some basics, phrases and words which may be helpful to beginners and tourists. The program is menu prompted offering; The House, The Countryside, The Beach, The Cafe, The Street, The School, Numbers and Time. Whichever topic is selected you are then presented with four options; **1) Pictures only** — which provides graphics, slowly building up, each new item annotated at the top in English and French: **2) Pictures with test** — the graphics are repeated and you may opt to type in the French when the computer prompts with the English, or vice versa: **3) Phrases only** — no graphics here, but a range of useful phrases in English like, 'Is it possible to go riding?' which may be translated into French by pressing key C: **4) Pictures**



Dans le jardin. . . .

and phrases — which runs through the pictures again and then into the phrases with your memory refreshed.

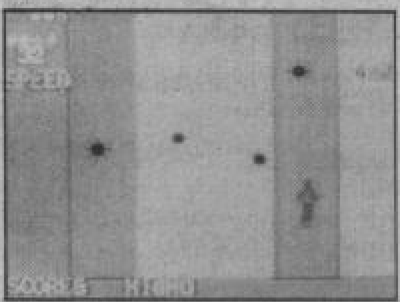
Under **Numbers**, the screen displays imperial and metric equivalents whilst large figures at the top count up from 1, giving the French spelling beside them. Under **Time**, the display gives the days of the week and the months in English and French, displays a clock face and invites you to ask the time. You can key in a time, say 12.30, and this is then drawn on the clock face, and the French spelling for the time given.

The program contains a lot of quite attractive graphics, some with simple animation, and it will obviously be valuable for young French beginners as well as adult starters. It won't, however, do much for your pronounciation!

Robot Runner

Producer: **Longman**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Software: **by Micromega, Tony Poulton**

Robot Runner is a number game for children aged 6 years and upwards. Pilot your robot across the number ways of Andron. You'll need to know your tables and be prepared for unknown dangers of a far off planet.



When the tape has loaded the player's name can be entered, after which a menu comes up asking which multiplication table you want to use from 1 x to 9x or a mixture. Having selected the table the screen cuts to the coloured number ways, five in all. The robot runner stands at the bottom, waiting to enter the first way. Down this first way comes a sum, say 2 x 7. Using the cursor keys 6 (down) and 7 (up) a figure at the top left can be made to increase or decrease. When it reaches the right figure (14 in this case), your robot may cross safely. Now in the second way another sum appears and you continue in this fashion across the 'ways'. When he has reached the fifth way you may guide him to one of several treasures on the right of the screen; when these have all gone, you progress onto another and more dangerous screen.

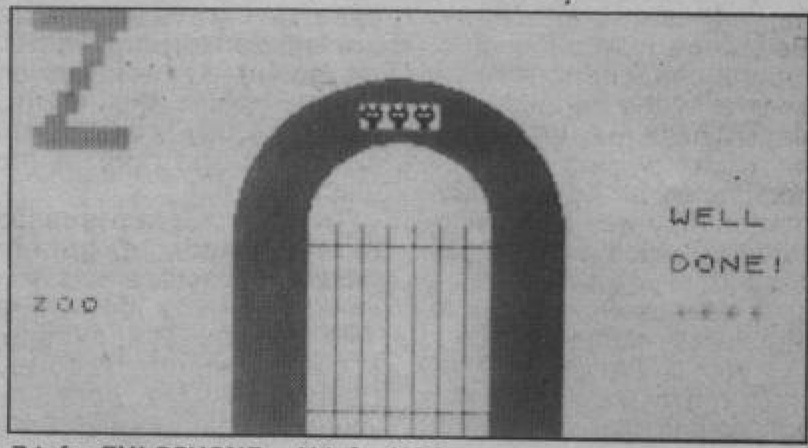
The cursor keys 5 (left) and 8 (right) are used to guide the robot across the ways. To make life more exciting there are de-energising obstacles that live on the ways and float down, threatening the robot unless you can get the sum right quickly and move on, but the cursor keys are also used to avoid them if all else fails.

The game is accompanied by parental program notes and full instructions for using the game. Loading screns are very good, and the use of colour throughout is excellent.

ABC

Producer: **Artic**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
group: **Ages 5-8**

This program is aimed at primary school children 5-8 years old, and is designed to improve spelling skills. You are asked to 'press a letter'. Depending upon which alphabet key is pressed, the screen displays a drawing and a large graphic of the letter chosen, and tells you what the drawing is. For instance, pressing V results in a van being drawn. At the top it says 'V is for VAN', and at the bottom, 'Now spell VAN'. These details remain for a few seconds so they may be digested, then the word disappear and the child may press the keys V-A-N. If the word is incorrect the computer beeps as soon as the incorrect letter is pressed. If spelt correctly the child is rewarded with flashing border colours and a tune. There are several tunes in the program. Although most words incorporated are very simple, CAT, DOOR, FISH, there are longer words like UMBRELLA and XYLOPHONE included.



Z is for ZYLOPHONE — X is for XOO.

This program is certainly for younger children and will undoubtedly prove an entertaining way of doing elementary spelling. A drawback to its durability might prove to be the tunes, which rapidly become repetetive, although they are all popular nursery rhymes. It also seems a little pricey for what it does, but it is a very easy program to use.

Special Agent

Producer: **Heinemann**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Software: **Five Ways**

This game is designed to develop the ability to read, understand timetables, interpret information quickly and make logical decisions based on information in a situation where there are many possibilities. It includes insights into the relative speeds and costs of air and rail travel, and lets children become familiar with the positions and names of Europe's cities and towns.

The game comes in a large plastic folder with the cassette tucked in one side and the large format, colour book (16 pages) in the other.

The game is played on a very large scale, and in fact comes very close to a mixture between adventure and strategy games that might well appeal to much older people. Basically you sit in your control centre of spy-



ing with a map of Europe. Below the map all sorts of reports come in from secret agents in the various locations. These may be in clear or code (which can be deciphered bit by bit). Information may well be from informers (which must be purchased) or it may tell you a spy has been eliminated. More spies can be hired.

If you decide you must go to a city to make contact with your agent there, a sheet of various timetables can be displayed and journies may be undertaken by various modes of transport relative to speed, cost and convenience.

The graphics are very detailed and complex, but the game is fun to play, backed up by a heavily illustrated book with background to spies in fact and fiction as well as information on the many cities and towns involved in the adventure. Despite the slightly high price, this is an undoubtedly excellent package for the price.

Pathfinder

Producer: **Widgit**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Group: **Ages 4-9**

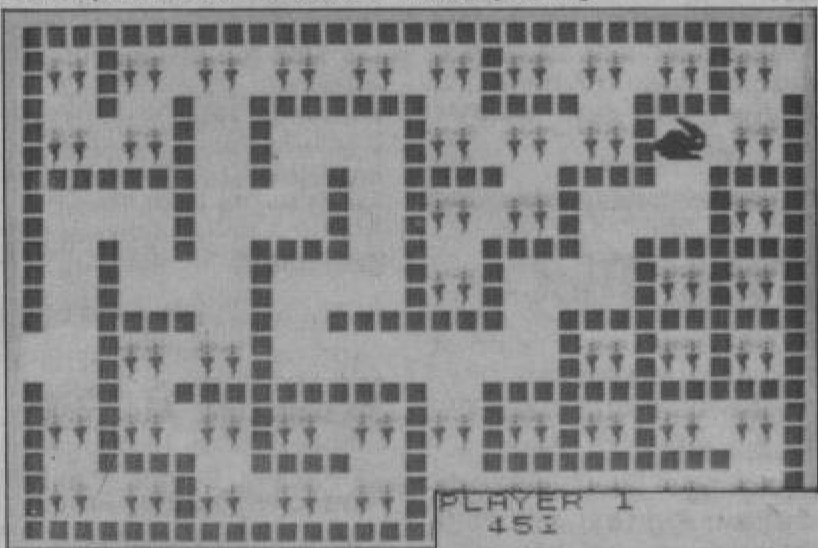
This tape contains four programs based on maze structures and is designed to help children develop spatial skills and forward planning. In the first you must guide a rabbit through a maze, eating carrots on the way. This is fairly easy, the idea being to look ahead, and pick the shortest route to the exit. There is only one proper route through. The second maze game is much more advanced. In this one, a kangaroo must be guided through, but the player must program the moves by selecting the required direction and then inputting how many moves are needed. The scope of the game expands with the player's growing skill, since the kangaroo's route through the entire maze can be planned and inputted before executing. To begin with a single move at a time can be executed by the computer. Incorrect entries are immediately highlighted on sound as well as on screen, while the entries made are slowly added in a column to the right of the display area.

The third program is called **Picnic**. Guide a hungry monster through a park and let him eat his lunch. The idea is that the monster should eat four items dotted randomly in the 'park', by visiting them in a pre-set order, and that this should be done without crossing his own trail or reversing on his trail. There are two levels, one with the playing squares clearly marked, and the second where the park is a solid area.

The final game is **Frogs**. Guide a frog across the pond and collect frog friends on the way. The 'pond' is a grid of 7 squares by 10 across. In some there are water lillies, and in some there are frogs. The object is to discover the best way across that allows you to collect more frogs on the way, remembering that you cannot cross a square with a water lilly in it. This becomes a surprisingly subtle game, since not all the frogs are collectable — some may be unreachable because of the positions of the water lillies.

All four games use the cursor, or arrow keys, which are easily identifiable by the child playing. The graphics throughout are large and brightly coloured. These games should prove very entertaining to play as well as providing a very real challenge. The Kangaroo game actually leads the player in the direction of programming as well.

Carrots prove better than sticks at forward planning.



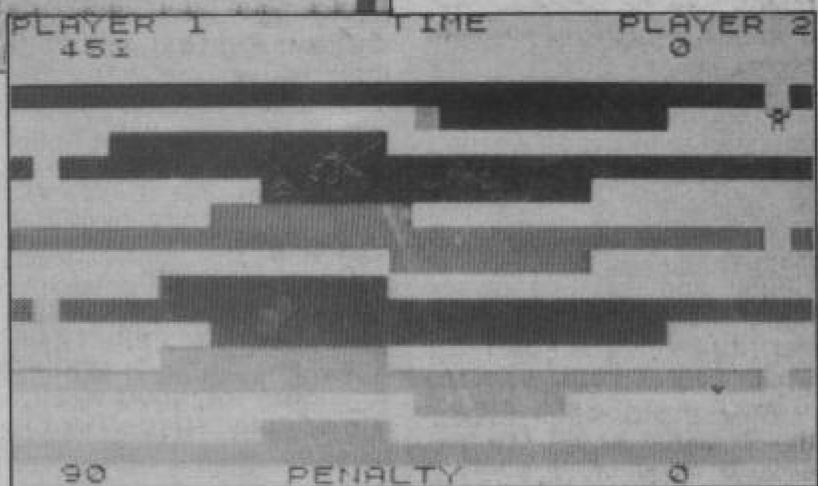
Bull Tables

Producer: **Lotus-Soft**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.50**

Bull Tables contains three programs on one cassette. **Bull Tables** itself is an arithmetic game. After loading a menu offers the option of addition, subtraction, multiplication or division. When you have made your choice you can select between 6 levels of skill. At the highest level questions can be as difficult as 23 x 35 = ? At the easiest level, as simple as 1 x 3 = ? The screen displays the sum to be done at the top left. At the bottom a 'Table Man' stands ready above a table of numbers 0 to 9. On the right is a paddock with a bull in it. As soon as the game starts, the bull charges at the paddock wall, slowly eating chunks out of it. The object is to get ten sums correct before the bull breaks out and destroys the numbers. The game is personalised by the child when he or she is asked to enter their name at the start.

After the work comes the play. The two programs following are games. **Nine Lives** provides the task of catching twenty mice. You are a cat, your enemy is a black dog. The mice are dotted about the screen and the cat must go round touching them, avoiding the dog, who will chase the cat. Three bones per life are the best way of slowing the dog down for a moment. Any mice touched by the dog are sent to safety.

Candyman is for two players, who must get their 'men' through a series of opening and shutting doors. They can see how long it takes them as they are playing against the clock. Throughout all three programs the simple graphics are very entertaining and move nicely despite the program being written in BASIC. The package offers good value for money.



Candy coloured stripes – fun after learning your (Bull) Tables..

Educational Reviews

Due to shortage of space we have been unable to include more than a fraction of the review material received, but we shall be wading through more in future issues of CRASH. May we take this opportunity to thank all the software houses who have been sending us games, your co-operation is very much appreciated.

Mountains of Ket

Producer: **Incentive**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **R.A. McCormack**

Mountains of Ket is the first part of the *Ket Trilogy*. Each adventure is complete in itself, although one follows on from the other. The next two parts are to be released later.

Just two weeks ago you were framed with a murder and sentenced to death, but pardoned as long as you undertook a dangerous mission. To ensure your loyalty a magic assassin bug has been implanted in your neck which will kill you at the first sign of doing a bunk. It's called Edgar (or Spectrum to you)! Your mission is to reach the far side of the mountains alive and to do this you must locate the secret entrance at the base of the Mountains of Ket. These lie a short horse ride east of the small village. Naturally, lots have gone before, but none have ever returned.

CRITICISM

'This is a text adventure, where your constant companion, the implanted killer bug Edgar, is none other than your favourite Spectrum. So all the descriptions come couched in terms of 'we, us'. If you dally too long, Edgar will get impatient and tick you off. The problems are traditional in as much as the village and its inhabitants can provide you with essential equipment, such as weapons, food and a horse. The initial problems are to discover how to get them to part with all this gear. I managed to buy an axe from a shopkeeper, but when I wanted the lamp there was no money left, so I tried using the axe! Adventure characters seem to have got very used to the bloodthirsty ways of Spectrum users who wander into their lives — this shopkeeper was more than ready for me! The statistics told me the sad story — my prowess and energy levels were all less than his and whereas my luck level was high his said 'not applicable' which I thought sounded very ominous! He won.'

'The text is all nicely laid out and the program has what seems to be a reasonably large vocabulary. Entries are processed instantly, so there's no waiting about. If you get into a fight the statistics appear at the top telling you your chances of winning, and the text is very lively in describing the blows, offering you fast options on continuing or running. Otherwise it continues round by round until one of you runs or snuffs it. I haven't got all that far yet, but there certainly seems to be a large number of locations contained in the program. A map helps. This is certainly one to ponder over and come back to. It can be saved fortunately so you can cogitate in bed at night. Looks like more sleepless nights!'

Playability	**68%**
Getting started	**79%**
Addictive qualities	**65%**
Value for money	**80%**
Overall	**73%**

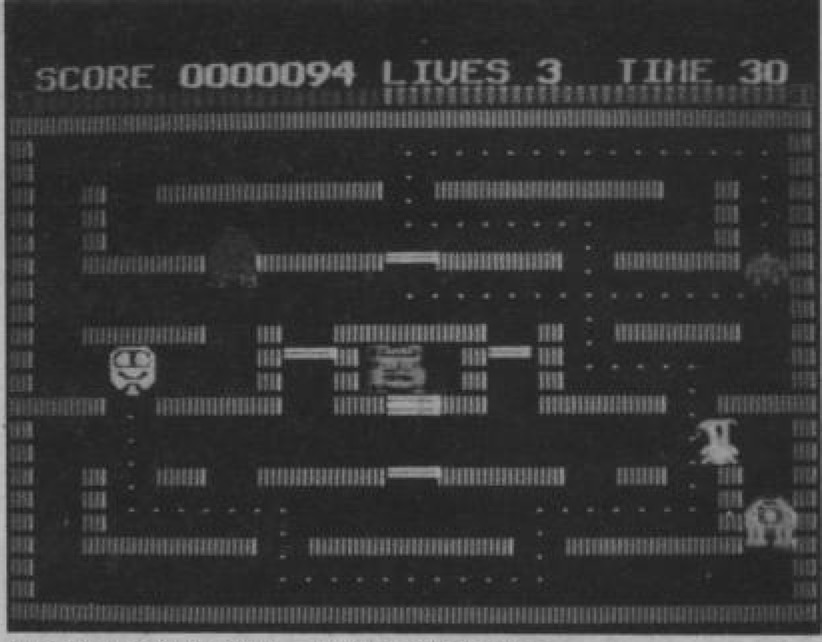
Robot Riot

Producer: **Silversoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Patrick Richmond**

Working for the Acme Robot Manufacturing Co. is not an easy business when the robots keep running riot. You're in the control room one day when you notice the robots are out and playing dangerously. The only answer is to send out the Bomber!

Silversoft have taken a well worn theme, turned it on its head, and come out with a new type of game. For want of a better comparison this is a backward 'Pac Man' type game. Instead of eating dots, here you lay them.

The screen represents the factory corridors, a reasonably complex maze. When the game starts the bomber, 'you', must move round the corridors laying mines. To complete the screen every corridor must be laid. This tempts the king robot out of his central lair, so that you can get in and progress to the next level. What you're up against is a handful of different robots (ghosts backwards?) which start to materialise in the four corners, until the screen is running with them. Fortunately there is also a power mite, which replenishes your rapidly fading supply when you run over it. As soon as you do, another materialises somewhere else. Another unpleasant problem is that all round the central enclosure the corridors are cut off by several sliding doors which open and close. Not only does this hinder your mine-laying program, it also can get you nastily trapped if you're not careful.



The robots are revolting — but the game's okay!

CRITICISM

'An original idea, and a good one at that. A bit slow at first, but as the game progresses the action gets livelier. Quite tense, when having laid the last mine, you have only 30 seconds to get into the control room once the king robot is out.'

It's similarity to 'Pac Man' is a bit off-putting at first, but I warmed quite rapidly to this game after 10 minutes playing. Although it isn't exactly fast, it turns out to be quite demanding on the player. Perhaps better suited to younger players than hardened addicts, but actually quite addictive anyway. Nice colours and amusingly animated characters.'

'A good use of colour and nice, smooth graphics combined with the continuous sound, make this into a good-average game. An advance on 'Pac Man', it is one of those maze games that will probably appeal to many. I didn't find it all that addictive, although very playable after a few minutes. The opening and shutting doors, adds a touch of drama too, especially as it can put you in a tight spot, and frustratingly cut you off at the last second from your power mite! Not bad at all.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: very good, Z/X left/right, K/M up/down
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive
Colour: good
Graphics: good
Sound: continuous, average
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: multiple
General rating: above average, very good for younger players.

Use of computer	**65%**
Graphics	**68%**
Playability	**75%**
Getting started	**78%**
Addictive qualities	**68%**
Value for money	**65%**
Overall	**70%**

Speed Duel

Producer: **DK Tronics**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **K. Larter**

Speed Duel is **DK Tronics** contribution to the elusive Spectrum version of the famous 'Pole Position' type game, where you roar around a race track in pursuit of, or pursued by, other racing cars in an attempt to reach the finish line first.

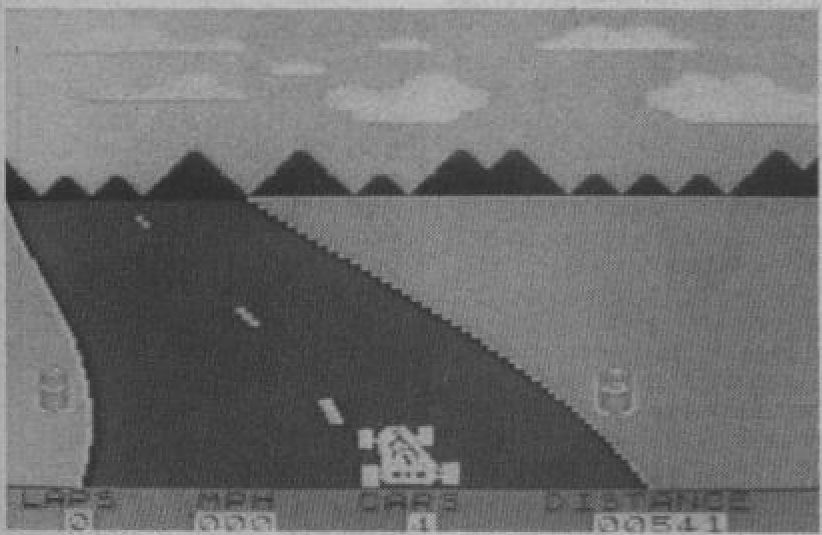
This version features solid 3D graphics, complete with bends, moving horizon and the road seen in perspective. There is a choice of five circuits to choose from and you can race against a choice of computer cars ranging from one to five.

CRITICISM

'Overall, the graphics

aren't bad, with quite a large car, though smaller than the ones, in *Grand Prix Driver* or *Road Racer*, a bright blue road with centre lines, clouds in the sky and black mountains in the distance. The road is in perspective, but it doesn't narrow down all that much before hitting the horizon. There are no gears to change, which should make the game easier to play, but in fact the car tends to be very uncontrollable, wobbling from left to right much too quickly.'

good touch. The graphics are reasonable and the 3D works about as well as any other spectrum version, but it was irritating that you kept crashing when your car hadn't even touched the edge of the road sometimes. This seems to depend on your angle to the verge, and I presume the program is reading character blocks, so that sometimes you actually have collided when it looks as if you haven't. A reasonable racing gamé, but only an average game.'



Speed Duel — fast but difficult to control.

'The graphics are fairly smooth and there's a good use of colour too. You must complete 3 circuits of the track before the computer's cars. This is more difficult than I first thought because bends come upon you and allow no time to think. This makes the game rather unrealistic. On top that of you travel at not more than 50 m.p.h. or you end up in a mangled heap of steel and rubber! An important point to make is that the cassette inlay says this is a 16K and 48K game, but on the cassette itself it clearly says 48K only. Which is it?'

'There's quite a lot of good detail in this version, although I still think *Road Racer* is better. The choice of circuits and oponents is a

COMMENTS

Control keys: CAPS/Z left/right, SYM. SHIFT/SPACE brake/accelerate
Joystick: unstated
Keyboard play: difficult
Colour: good
Graphics: reasonable 3D
Sound: average, continuous
Lives: 5
Screens: 4 with scrolling
General rating: average.

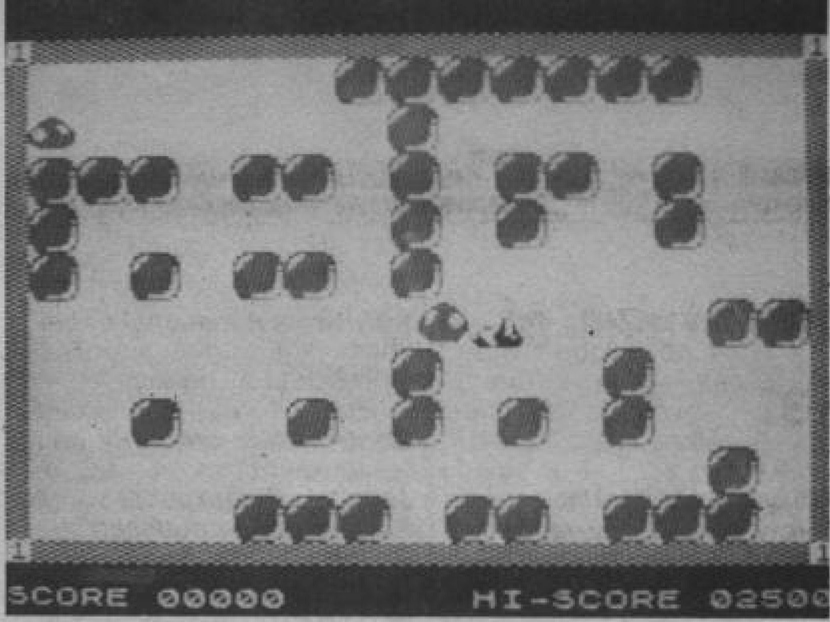
Use of computer	58%
Graphics	70%
Playability	62%
Getting started	35%
Addictive qualities	53%
Value for money	58%
Overall	56%

Freez' Bees

Producer: **Silversoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Machine code**

Freez' bees adds another version of 'Pengo' or 'Pengy' to the Spectrum file. The object of the game is to walk your penguin round the ice fields, burning away the ice blocks to create space, or send them shooting off to try and crush the nasty snow bees who are out to get you.

Features in this version include the penguin's ability to electrify the fence, stunning



One penguin dead as a dodo in Freez'Bees.

the bee that touches if for a moment, and the illumination of ice blocks containing bee eggs at the start of each phase. You receive extra points for clearing these blocks before the eggs hatch out.

CRITICISM

'The graphics in *Freez' bees* are very nice, quite large and very colourful on a white ground. They move smoothly as well, and at a fair pace even on the slower of the ten speeds. I quite enjoyed playing it and the game itself is very addictive when you get fluent at controlling the penguin.'

'Once a snow bee is on your tail you may as well give up as it's hard to get away, and extremely difficult to get round a block, turn and fire at your tormentor. Apart from this aspect, which I think spoils the game's playability, this type of game is really very simple and not worth buying. This version has good sound though.'

'This version is frantically difficult to play — perhaps too hard to keep your attention — so it's as well that there's a range of speeds to select. The colours and graphics are good, so's the sound and tunes. If you're looking for a 'Pengo' game, then this is a good and hard version.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z/X left/right, K/M up/down, L= slide or crumble an ice block
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: single key action, but fast
Colour: simple but bright
Graphics: good
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 10 speeds
Lives: 3
General rating: reasonable implementation of fair game.

Use of computer	60%
Graphics	57%
Playability	59%
Getting started	63%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	57%
Overall	61%

Paratroopers

Producer: **Rabbit**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.99**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **J.F. Cain**

It gets awfully lonely sitting on your own in a bunker until the enemy decides to drop in! 'Your bunker' is in fact a field gun which you control, sitting in the bottom centre of the screen. Above you, in the sky, helicopters stream by in both directions, spewing paratroopers out on top of you. Their object is to get three men safely on the ground, at which point they stride off and return in a large tank against which you are defenceless (and dead!) and that's that. Your aim is to prevent them from landing any men and you score for paratroopers destroyed and helicopters knocked out.

The game continues on after loss of life, resetting the score to zero, quite automatically.

CRITICISM

'Your field gun can be traversed to cover most of the screen, but you must be accurate as firing reduces your score. The graphics are quite good and the game is fun to play.'

The animation of the gun is very good. The sense of perspective is a clever cheat since both height and rotation of the gun are only done with a left and right key, but it

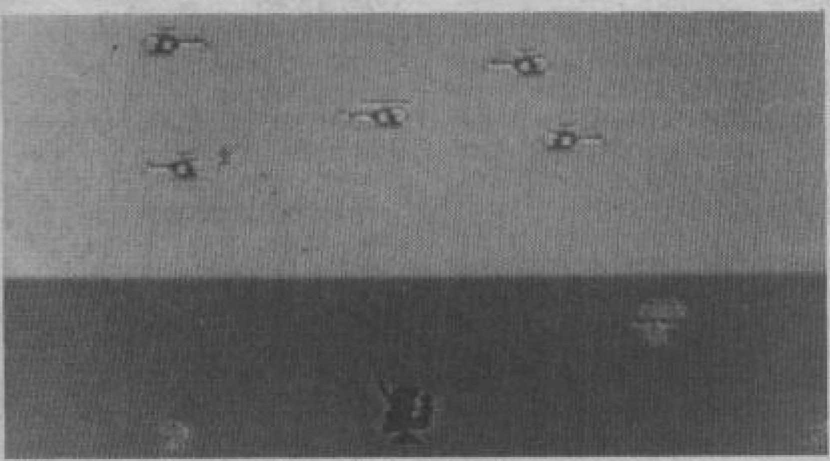
means the drawing of the gun must go through what looks like seven different 'frames' to create the illusion. The details of paratroopers and helicopters are also good, with some paras opening their chutes immediately, other delaying to the last second, and some poor devils whose chutes fail to open and get splatted on the ground. You're dead if three land successfully, or if one lands right on top of you. Fun, but perhaps not very addictive.'

'This is quite a neat idea, which scores with its fine graphics, but there wasn't quite enough depth to the idea to keep me enthralled, and I thought the sound could have been better — no gunshooting noise for instance. The user-defined keys are a good idea!

COMMENTS

Control keys: user-defined for left/right/fire
Joystick: Protek, AGF
Keyboard play: responsive
Colour: reasonable average
Graphics: good, well detailed
Sound: below average
Skill levels: it's main drawback — only 1
Lives: 1
General rating: good, but not very addictive.

Use of computer	70%
Graphics	68%
Playability	66%
Getting started	62%
Addictive qualities	49%
Value for money	55%
Overall	**62%**



The name of the game is a good aim — Paratroopers.

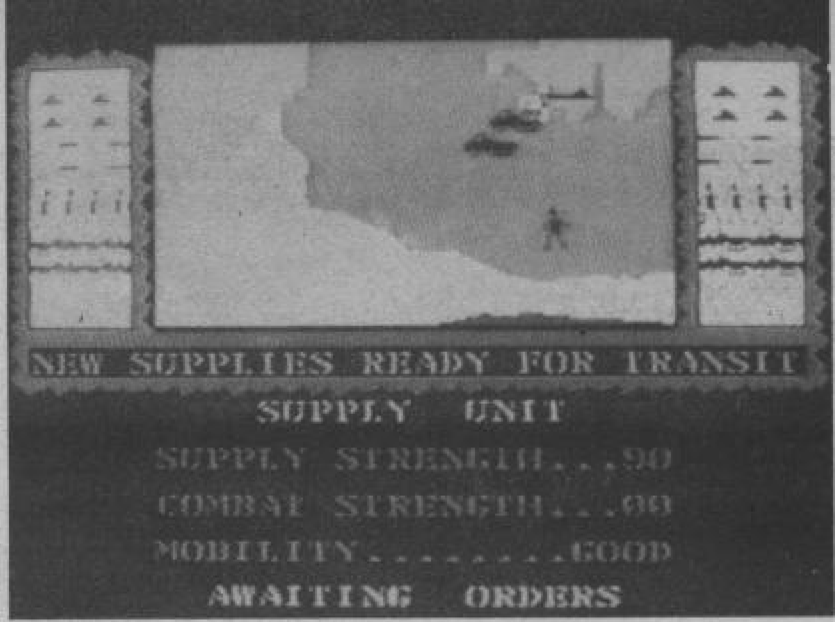
Stonkers

Producer: **Imagine**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **John Gibson**

In an unusually terse and to the point scenario introduction, Imagine inform you that you are poised on the very brink of battle — the enemy have had their port and HQ under siege for weeks, and now is the eve of the battle. As commander of your forces, you must out-think, out-manoeuvre and out-fight your foe.

Stonkers is a graphical strategy and tactics game between the player and the computer. Unlike many popular war games already available, in *Stonkers* you are not expected to spend ages setting up the scenario, distributing weapons and moving your forces unit by unit. Both of you and the enemy already have tanks, artillery and infantry positioned round the countryside, and the enemy's forces are on the move as soon as the game commences. In fact, this turns out to be a very fast moving game of an almost arcade nature.

The war zone is large, and is shown on screen in two ways; a large map which shows total playing area — two chunks of land, divided by a river estuary and connected by a bridge; and a large scale map, which shows a big close up with graphical details of the various units. On this map, when a unit is being deployed, you can see it moving, its speed depends on the terrain which is also shown as contours. On the total map a cross-hatched cursor block, indicating the area of the large scale map, can be rapidly moved by directional keys. Pressing the fire key switches maps. On the close up map a X cursor is moved with directional keys, and if positioned directly above a unit, will cause it to start moving towards the coast when the fire key is pressed. Below the display area, a ticker tape keeps you informed as to what's going on and how you have been Stonking.



Stonking along with Imagine.

Keeping up the strengths of your forces is done by moving supplies from your port (when the supply ship has docked) to where they are needed using your 4 supply units. If a unit fails to receive supplies in time it will be lost for good.

The game moves at a fast pace and holds a number of undisclosed surprises.

CRITICISM

'The game is long and fairly "deep" due to the task of destroying either the enemy's Port and HQ or his forces, and also due to the scale of the war. You may be needing infantry down on the coast fast, but can it be spared (or even get there in time) from the distant highlands? *Stonkers* appealed to me much more than most of the other wargames due to its higher quality of graphics, large scale and simple controls. Very addictive — I found myself having a bash during any spare hour.'

'The graphics and overall presentation are excellent. I like the ticker tape which offers you the selection menu for keyboard, joysticks and skill levels. I was surprised by the speed at which Stonkers *moves once all the various units are being deployed. It gets to the point where you barely have any time left to think, and you're punching keys all the while. There are 2 skill levels, the harder only allows you to see an enemy unit if one of your own units is in the same vicinity, and this certainly stretches the tactical abilities to the limit. An excellent game.'*

'If only Imagine can get rid of the program bug which causes it to crash on occasion, *Stonkers* is set to be the best wargame I've seen yet. It keeps you on the go constantly without having to wait while the enemy "has his turn". The simple controls help a lot, too, in making this game very playable.'

After checking with Imagine, we have been informed that the first two batches of tapes they received did have a problem which causes the program to crash inexplicably. This has now been corrected. If you have encountered this problem, you may return the cassette to Imagine and they will replace it. But anyone buying *Stonkers* now should encounter no problems.

COMMENTS

Control keys: CAPS, X,V,N left; Z,C,B,M right; 2nd. row = up, 3rd. row = down, top row = fire
Joystick: Protek, AGF, Fuller, Sinclair, Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive and fast
Colour: very good, lots of it
Graphics: very good
Sound: not much, but what is used is high quality
Skill levels: 2
Screens: 2, with smooth scrolling
General rating: excellent battle game which manages to be very addictive.

Use of computer	90%
Graphics	70%
Playability	70%
Getting started	58%
Addictive qualities	90%
Value for money	87%
Overall	**78%**





Castle Blackstar

Producer: **SCR Adventures**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£8.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Sheppard, Cummins & Richardson**

The task in this text-only adventure, which is the first of a planned series of 'Artemis Quests', is to enter Castle Blackstar at the behest of a beautiful, mysterious woman glimpsed in a dream. There you must recover her power orb from the vast underground caverns. To achieve maximum points all treasures found must be cleaned of their evil, all puzzles solved and the orb returned to our dear lady, who is, of course, no less than a Goddess — Artemis. She promises to covertly help you during your quest. The maximum score is 240 and, if successful, you may keep all the loot!

A note in the accompanying 8-page booklet says that the driver software for *Castle Blackstar* is based extensively on the **Adven-80** program developed by **Peter Scargill.**

CRITICISM

'As a text-only adventure amongst the new wave of graphic adventures, *Castle Blackstar* manages to hold its own very well. The location descriptions are nice, detailed and manage to create atmosphere in simple terms very well. The computer's replies to one's more nonsensical commands have a good touch of humour, and with fast machine code response this works very entertainingly.'

'I quickly found the castle at the beginning of the quest, but having strayed two moves away from it into the forest, I found the compass directions magically faded and I couldn't get back. Twenty steps later I was still stumbling blindly through thick forest. 'Climb Tree' to get a better view only elicited the response that such a dangerous undertaking was useless and I wouldn't find anything up there anyway! Starting to think the forest was intended as a death trap, I suddenly came upon a Gingerbread House in a clearing — and that was a death hole — three moves later I'd been turned into a wriggling worm and ended up inside some bird's tummy! Great!''

'A good text adventure beats a mixed graphics/text one anyday, and *Castle Blackstar* ranks with Artic's best. But SCR had better reconsider their pricing — £8.95 is way over the top for what they offer. Otherwise a great start for a new company and I look forward to Artemis Quest 2. Exploring the inside of the castle was great fun, and I was impressed that turning a winch in one room actually operated something four or five locations away without my even knowing it until later when my apparently meaningless activity proved valuable! Beware of the fierce musical eagles (neat), and I hope you have more luck than me in getting a source of light to set about exploring the dark lower regions (sorry, Artemis, let you down there . . .) Great game, pity about the price.'

COMMENTS

Graphics: text only, very simple, black letters on white ground, clear and easy to read
General rating: a good adventure, but pricey.

Use of computer	80%
Playability	80%
Getting starting	89%
Addictive qualities	83%
Value for money	45%
Overall	75%

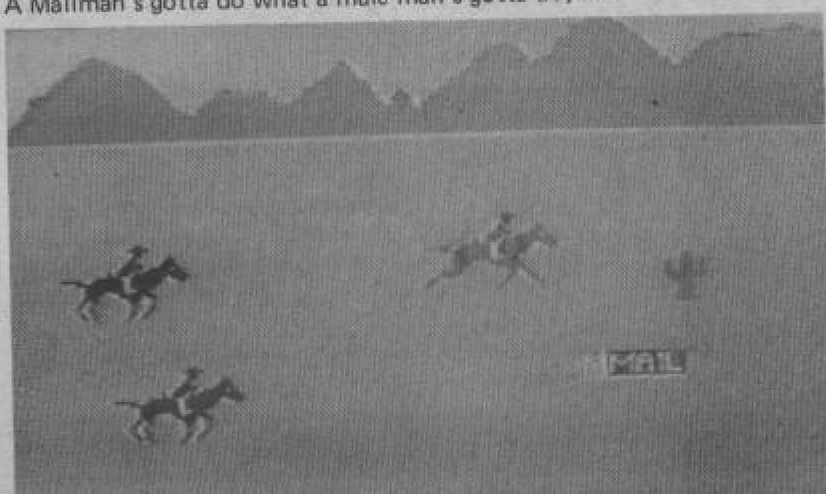
Dodge City

Producer: **Phoenix**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price:
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Fraser Orr**

Dodge City comes packaged in a large video-style plastic box and contains two cassettes. The first is an action game, the second an adventure game, each inextricably tied to the other. The object is to master twelve skill levels in the action cassette, and if you do you will be given the running code for the adventure cassette. Without this secret code you will be unable to play the adventure. At the end of each skill level you will be given a clue, and all the clues are vital to solving the adventure.

The action tape shows you a Western desert plain with mountains in the background, and 'you' are a Pony Express rider. The aim is to collect four mail bags while avoiding the baddies on black horses chasing you. They shoot at you, and you can shoot back. If you hit one, he falls off his horse and dies, only to replaced a second later by another. The other problem takes the form of cactus plants — running into one results in a prickly end. On the first screen you find yourself chased by one baddy at a time, but on succeeding screens there are more baddies to contend with. These may be rotten cowboys, bandits, Mexicans or Indians and mixtures of all.

A Mailman's gotta do what a male man's gotta do, . . .



You lose a life if hit by a baddy, if you run into a cactus or if you fail to collect four consecutive mail bags. Between each skill level the picture cuts to the office, where a message has arrived for you — a clue to collect for the adventure.

When the adventure is loaded, you are asked for the code, if you get it wrong the program NEWs itself. The scenario for the adventure is that you must prove your innocence in the murder of *Dodge City's* deputy sheriff, who has been found dead in your hotel room with a pearl handle gun, presumed to have killed him, lying at your feet. Now, read on . . .

CRITICISM

'The graphics of the horses are very good, smooth and quite realistic, and those of the adventure are all quite detailed, taking up the top third of the display area. In the action sequence, the pursuers fire very quickly, sometimes when they're not even on the screen. I thought the adventure was quite a good one, but it takes a long time to get into as you must master 12 skill levels in the arcade tape. This is a daunting task. (I only managed five, but the producers were thoughtful enough to provide me with the secret code so I could get to see the adventure. Frustrated adventurers should send a stamped addressed envelope and fifty pounds to . . .) Seriously though, I think there is a danger of becoming bored with the arcade game before you manage 12 levels. If you want an adventure buy one, if you want arcade, buy it. The idea of **Dodge City** is debatable because unless you manage the first you cannot see the second, and I wonder how many adventure fans will want to wade through hours on an arcade game. Nevertheless, both games are above average in quality.'

'Both games have a nice sense of humour — the title page to the adventure is very good, and so is the first location which tells you 'Dodge City welcomes careful drovers'. A warning when entering the secret code —

the characters entered don't appear written on the screen, only dashes appear, which may confuse you into an error. The idea is a good one, although it probably won't appeal to serious adventure fans because of the arcade game coming first, and it is difficult to get through the adventure without those vital clues.'

'The action and adventure graphics are pretty good, but there's not much sound. The worst thing is the poor instructions which don't tell you the control keys, which are numerous in option and very badly laid out.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: poorly positioned; left = 2/0/W/S/SYM SHIFT, right = 1/Q/A/CAPS/P/ENTER, down = 3/E/D/X/I/K/M, up = 4/R/F/C/N/J/U, fire = 5/T/G/V/Y/H/B
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive, although confusing with the keys
Colour: good
Graphics: good
Sound: fair, none on adventure tape
Skill levels: 12 essential 24 in all (arcade tape)
Lives: 5 (arcade tape)
General rating: above average

Use of computer	45%
Graphics	70%
Playability	65%
Getting started	40%
Addictive qualities	57%
Value for money	64%
Overall	57%

1984

Producer: **Incentive**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **RMH Carter**

When George Orwell finished his famous novel about the future in 1948 it seemed logical to reverse the last two figures and call it 1984. Since then the date has had a semi-magical connotation. Well, now it *is* 1984, and to mark the occasion, **Incentive** (who brought you *Splat*) have released this governmental strategy game — a game of



economic survival.

The object is to prove that you can do better than our existing politicians. You, of course, are to be Prime Minister. Can you ride out three terms in power and survive two General Elections? At the start you inherit certain figures under the headings **Sources of Revenue** in millions of pounds, and **Details of Spending**, also in millions. These include (Revenue) Corporation tax, Value Added Tax, Income tax, Customs & Excise, and Loans: (Spending) Government contracts, Grants to industry, Public Sector spending, Govt. Department wages, Pensions, Unemployment Benefit, Child Allowance, Foreign Aid, and interest on borrowing.

This screen is followed by **Major Indicators**, a chart of 8 items which chart your progress, and which can be called up at any time to see how you are doing. This is followed by details on the **Minimum Lending Rate**, set at a given figure, but which you must adjust to suit you requirements. There is a bar code chart which indicates how well the economy is balanced between Government, Industry, Population, Banks and the World. If any one of these sectors gets dangerously out of balance, you may be forced to resign — a flagging industry, for instance, may be given a boost by an increase in the Grant to Industry.

The game also incorporates the major nightmare of any modern government, the wages claims. You have to deal with those in the Public and Private sectors as well as Civil Servants. You must decide on the level of Government Investment in banks, balance the effects of raising money through industrial levies, keep an eye on the funding of your own government departments, sort out the budget for each year, organise the levels of foreign aid, subsidise industry through grants, and finally, attend Cabinet Meetings on a wide variety of problems.

The game is accompanied by a detailed 13 page leaflet called *A Pocket Guide To Running Britain*, which explains the various functions of the game and the economy generally.

CRITICISM

'After an ominous title screen of the Houses of Parliament, the nightmare begins! The game proceeds along very sensible lines, informing of the next problem to be faced, and offering some prompts for beginners. I was doing really well, I thought, as I added nominal amounts to my departments (Health, Education, Housing, Defence etc.) but then a notice informed me that runaway government spending had brought me down! Well of course, I'm honest — politicians are.

COMMENTS

Colour and graphics: all very clear, with well used colour
Sound: useful entry beeps and the sound of Big Ben chiming
Skill levels: 1 — and that's enough!
General rating: an excellent strategy game with tons of scope.

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	68%
Playability	85%
Getting started	79%
Addictive qualities	63%
Value for money	85%
Overall	76%

Starclash

Producer: **Micromega**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Derek Brewster**

You are test-flying a new Starfighter in what was supposed to be empty space, when you are suddenly jumped by an Imperial Strike Force which has jumped from hyperspace. Tough luck. You can't outrun them, so you'll just have to fight it out alone. The enemy Mothership is protected by four waves of fighters. The object of the game is to destroy each wave in turn and fight your way through to the Mothership and then place a laser bolt in whichever of her two power cores is active. Added difficulties come in the form of meteor showers.

CRITICISM

'This game has been taken right from the arcades. I can't remember the arcade version name, but it's been around a fair time now. The graphics are smoothly moving and quite detailed characters. A problem you must watch out for is the ammo supply which runs down, forcing you to be accurate. A good, playable game, but it might lose its qualities after a bit.'

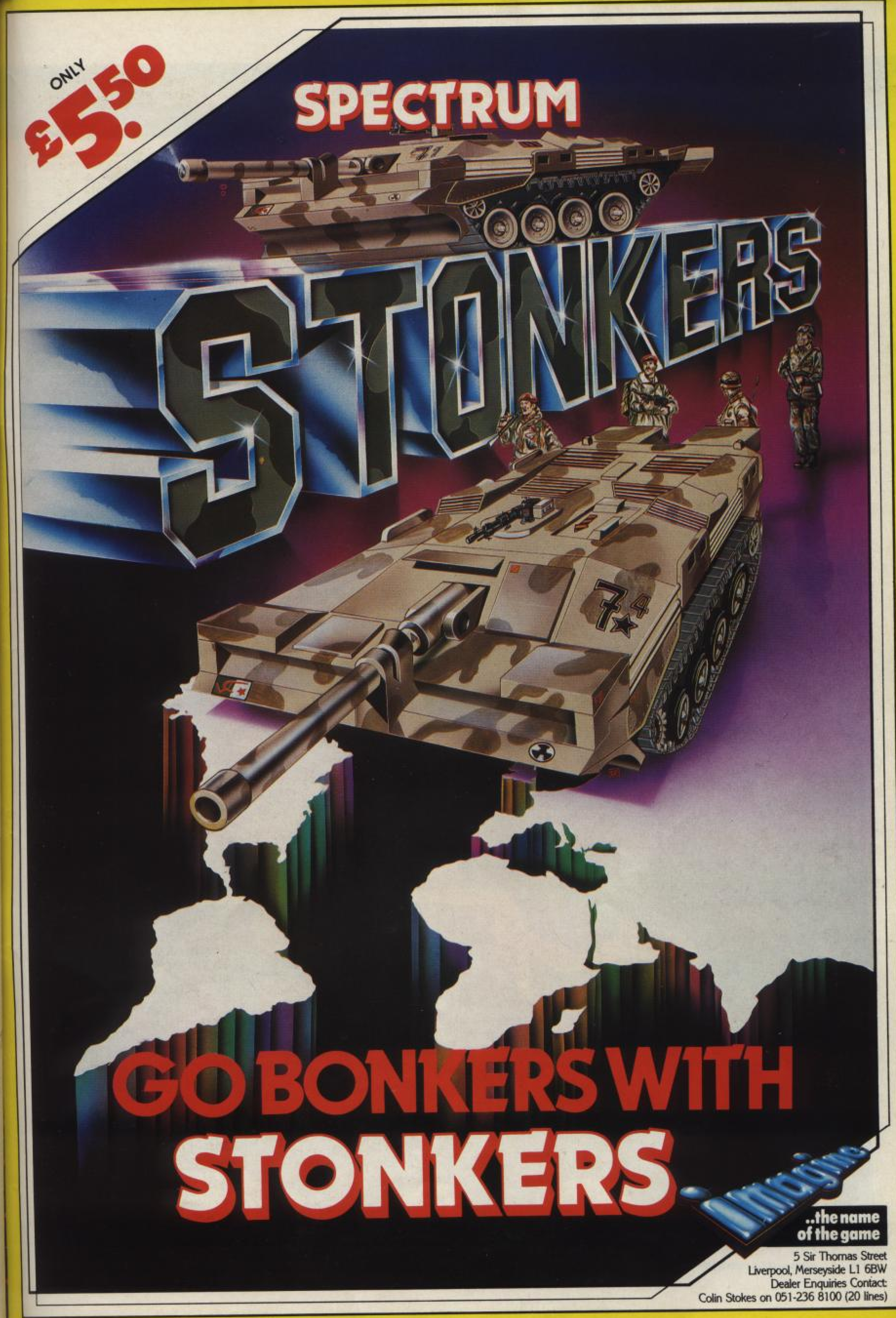
'It looks deceptively simple at first. The waves of attackers don't seem to move all that fast, as they jig their way down, but their concentrated fire power homes in on your position, so you can't stay still for a moment, and it's easy to get trapped between fighter fire and the flaming meteors that also descend thickly from above. Reasonably addictive to play.'

'*Starclash* is a shoot em up 'Invader' type in which each attack wave is more difficult to destroy than the last. It's not easy to get through to the Mothership at all. I would say this is well above the usual galaxian/invader game standard, almost a scaled down version of the arcade original *Altair*. Quite good.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: simple, well placed — Z/X left/right, SPACE = fire
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive
Colour: average to good
Graphics: good
Sound: continuous, fairly good
Skill levels: each wave harder
Lives: 3
Screens: 4 waves plus mothership
General rating: above average type good shoot em up.

Use of computer	72%
Graphics	69%
Playability	65%
Getting started	72%
Addictive qualities	63%
Value for money	70%
Overall	69%



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Update:

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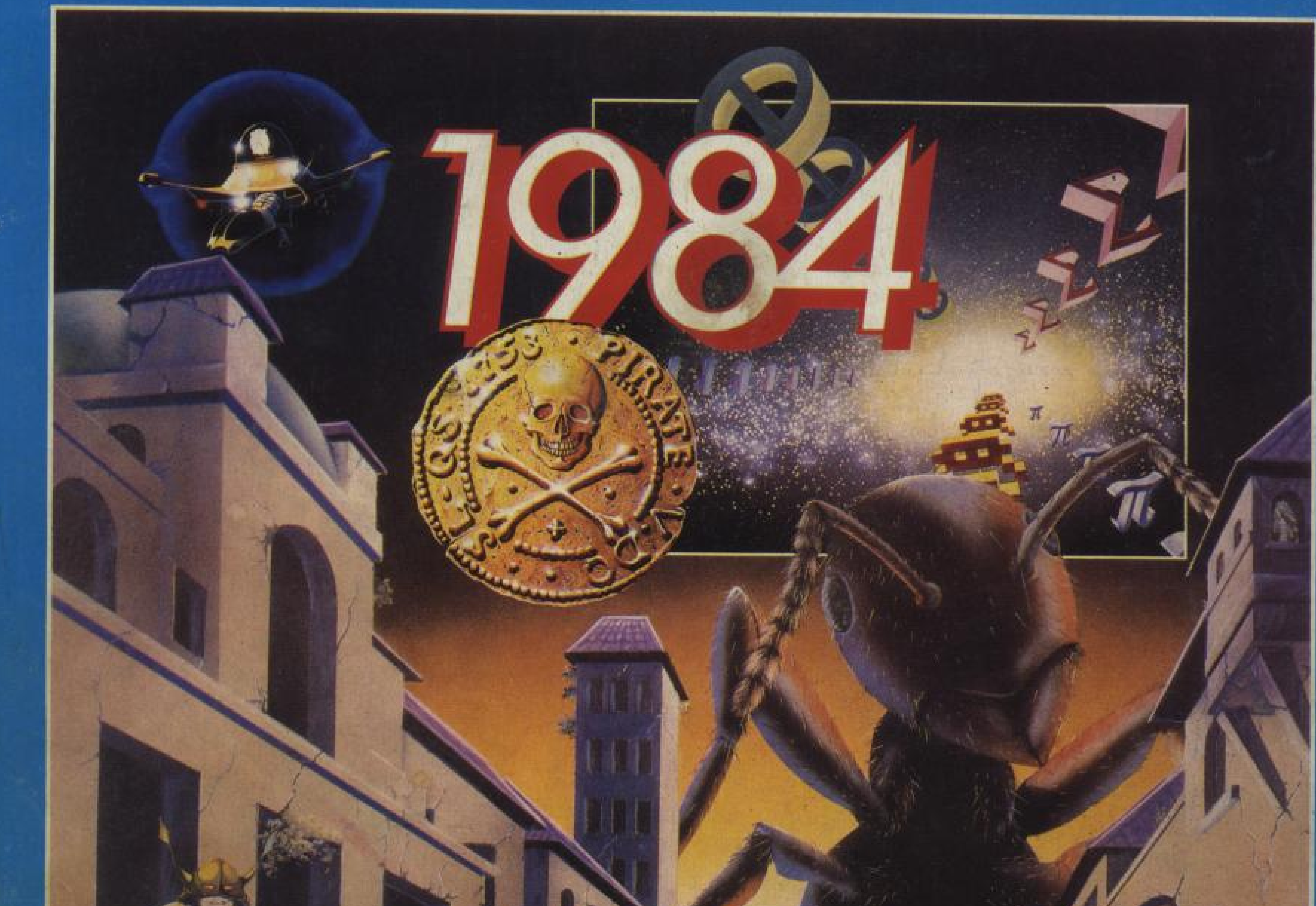


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